

TOP STORY: HOW S&L CROOKS GET AWAY WITH IT

June 13 - 26, 1994

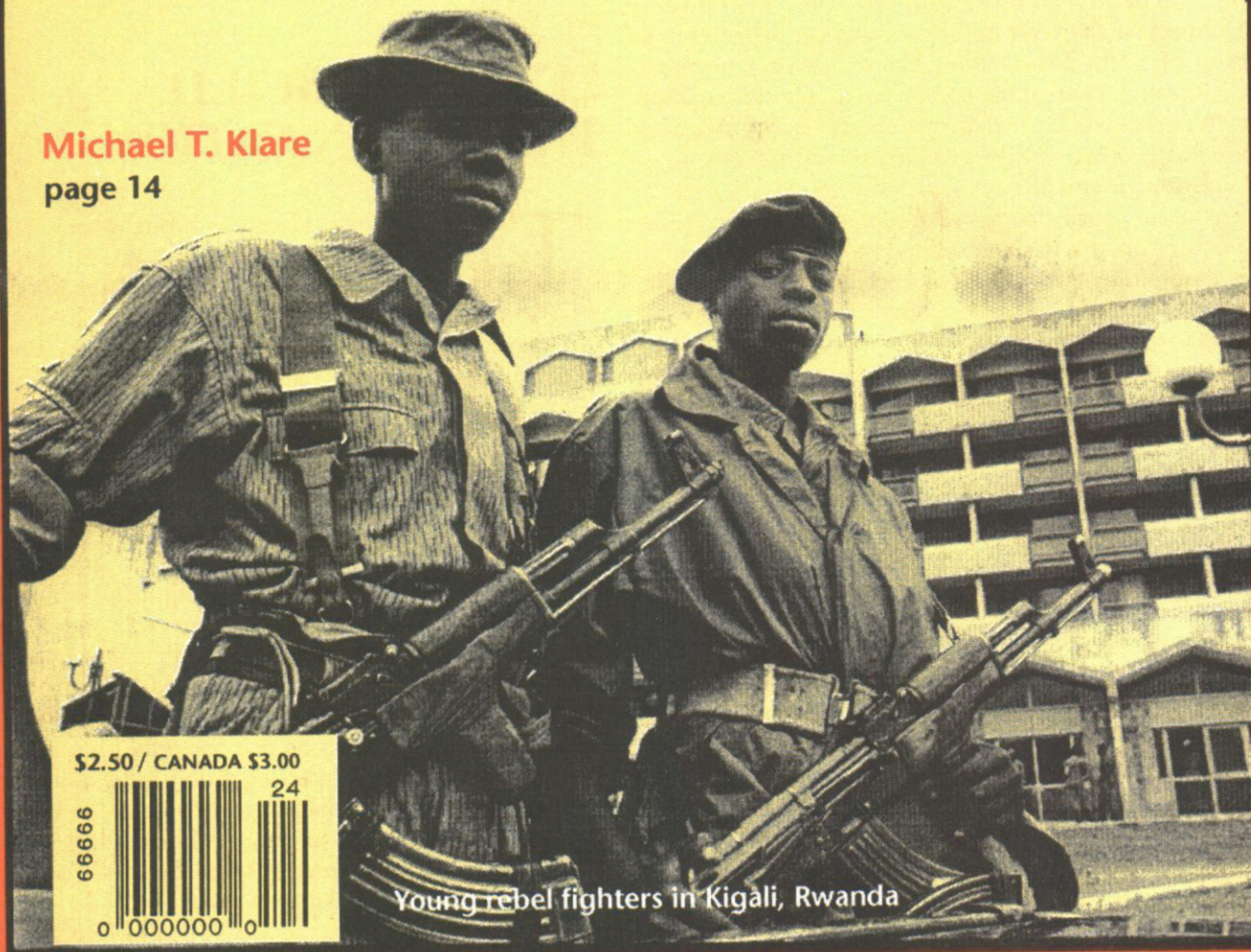
IN THE SETTIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

From Rwanda to Los Angeles, small arms may pose the greatest threat to peace in the post-Cold War era.

Michael T. Klare
page 14



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Young rebel fighters in Kigali, Rwanda

EDITORIAL

U. S. SURGEONS MEET THE LUDDITES

It's a far cry from being a textile worker in 19th-century England to being a surgeon in the United States today. But just like the Luddites—the 19th-century English artisans and skilled workers who fought against being turned into machine tenders by the merchant-manufacturers—the United States College of Surgeons is now trying to retain control over the way in which they do their work.

The surgeons, who endorsed the Wellstone-McDermott single-payer bill this spring, are now running a series of radio ads decrying administration plans to give insurance companies control over decisions about who to operate on and what operations to perform. The doctors argue that as highly skilled specialists they have the knowledge and the responsibility to decide what a patient needs. Such decisions, they say, should be made by doctors on the basis of their professional skill and their commitment to a patient's well-being. Corporate bureaucrats should not make complex medical decisions about patient care.

Most social scientists and, for that matter, most Marxist intellectuals would argue that while the Luddites had real grievances, their conversion to wage workers was inevitable. This early step in the evolution of industrial capitalism was necessary and desirable, the argument goes, because it laid the basis for vastly increased productivity, and therefore, for our modern economy. And, from a historical perspective, the process does now seem preordained. Indeed, starting early in the 19th century, capital began intruding

If insurance firms determine who gets what kind of surgery, doctors won't be the only losers.

into all areas of life, steadily absorbing independent occupations and reducing just about everyone to dependence on wages or salaries as a means of survival.

In the United States, as in Europe, political democracy has helped humanize this process. Representative government has limited the rapaciousness of capital. But its relentless tendency to dominate all aspects of our lives has proceeded apace.

The surgeons bring us near to the end of this road. Few professionals are better educated, as highly paid or as well organized. But surgeons now face the same fate as farmers, grocers, pharmacists, machinists and many other previously independent small businessmen displaced by the spread of capital. The difference is that while capitalism

was once a mixed blessing—creating poor working conditions and greater insecurity, but also providing modern material comforts—its continued expansion has become increasingly negative. When the Luddites lost their battle, at least consumers gained. If the surgeons lose theirs, we will all suffer with them as new layers of managed competition bureaucracy increase medical costs and decrease the quality of care.

LET THEM BUILD THEIR OWN NATION

The debate over Haiti has brought the Clinton administration ever closer to invasion, and has stripped away much of the doublespeak of the conservative opponents of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Like George Bush himself, former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft is urging Clinton not to invade Haiti, but to drop Aristide, whom he describes as “part of the problem.” Then Scowcroft would “oust the military” (he needn't say how) and set a date for new elections. His reason is that “we” should avoid the prolonged process of “nation building” in this troubled land.

Of course, Scowcroft had no problem with “nation building” in El Salvador, or nation-destroying in Nicaragua, or with invading Grenada and Panama, but that was different. The forces that the Reagan and Bush administrations were supporting in those cases were friends of corporate America. Aristide is only a friend of the Haitian people.

We agree with Scowcroft on one point: the United States should not engage in a process of nation-building in Haiti. The Haitian people can build their own nation as they see fit. And they will—if U.S. forces arrest the military leaders, then withdraw and let a multinational force help set up a new police force under Aristide's control. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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InTHESETIMES

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LETTERS

Prediction, not prescription

I am amazed by the letters that greeted my article on health care ("Second opinion," *ITT*, March 21) and by the editor's response to these letters. Has the *In These Times* readership been taken over by aliens who can't tell the difference between a prediction and a hortatory statement urging action? In this article, I did not criticize single-payer proposals. On the contrary, I recanted my earlier support for a version of managed competition. I argued that, "politics aside, a plan modeled on the Canadian system would be far preferable."

But I also argued that, as a matter of *fact*, when the legislative dust cleared this fall, Americans—and liberals in Washington—would be faced with a difficult choice between a proposal resembling Clinton's and one

that was far worse. In this case, I (personally) anticipated supporting the one similar to Clinton's, even though my own situation would not be improved by it. ("I'll have to demonstrate my altruism by defending the Clinton plan against its conservative rivals....") I was not telling some state representative in Vermont what he should do next week.

If I had to recast my argument with the benefit of two months' hindsight, I would probably be even more pessimistic in my *predictions*. The health proposals now being circulated by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) are not merely inferior to Clinton's managed competition, but inferior in some respects to that of Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN). In the end, Congress, and liberals, may be asked to choose between worse and worst.

John B. Judis
Washington

Appalled

I was, in a word, appalled by Woody Igou's Appall-O-Meter (*ITT*, May 16) in which Disney CEO Michael Eisner's \$200 million salary registered 1.1 while the "urban survival syndrome" criminal defense registered 6.8. An inversion of these ratings would have been more appropriate.

Eisner's salary, which is over 20,000 times the minimum wage, is no trifle. Shouldn't the Appall-O-Meter's needle jump higher than 1.1 when one man's pay could fund several thousand living-wage jobs?

Igou treats trickle-up morality in much bleaker tones, declaring the "urban survival syndrome" to be an "assault on the notion of free will." The notion of "free will" is truly under attack, but not by street criminals as much as by an economic system that deprives all but a select few of reward and responsibility. If economic elites can cite government regulations, tax burdens and even the fear of inflation as excuses for wrecking millions of lives throughout the world, then members of the underclass can rightfully cite the violent and desperate social conditions thus created as an excuse for trigger-happiness.

Here's my entry for the Appall-O-Meter: In the same issue in which *Newsweek's* Robert J. Samuelson devoted his column to justifying and defending Michael Eisner's salary, Dis-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



ney bought an eight-page, full-color pull-out advertisement. What a coincidence! So much for the "free and independent" press. (See *Newsweek*, April 25.) My rating: 6.4.

E. Dale Smith
Portland, Ore.

Who cares?

"Who leaked Whitewater?" (*ITT*, May 2). Can this be the fearless, muckraking *In These Times* we know and love, scourge of the powerful (and who is more powerful than the president of the United States?)?

You should be investigating how corrupt businessmen bought favors from the corrupt First Couple of Arkansas, not attacking the whistleblowers. Let the White House get its own "plumbers"!

Taras Wolansky
Jersey City, N.J.

Bleacher bums!

The alternative newsmagazine? In your May 16 issue, you had kind words for Richard Nixon, whose plan in 1968 to end the war in Vietnam was implemented only after the Christmas bombardment of Hanoi and Haiphong more than four years later. You also castigated the Nation of Islam, which Salim Muwakkil implicated in the assassination of Malcolm X.

You are an alternative newsmagazine as a bleacher seat is an alternative to a box seat.

Stuart Levine
Albuquerque, N.M.

\$270 billion can't be wrong

Money talks and democracy walks, says Joel Bleifuss (*ITT*, May 16). Community action is the way to keep from being shouted down and run over by big money interests, he says, and refers to California's Proposition 103 battle as an example.

Back in 1988, Californians wanted

to roll back auto insurance rates and get a refund on overcharges. We were able to get an initiative on the ballot and to fight off the insurance industry's \$70 million blitz, but we can't call it a success. No one has received a refund yet, no rates have been rolled back and there were some giant increases six months before the balloting.

Why didn't we succeed? Because the California Supreme Court rewrote the initiative. Yes, rewrote it, although their job is to interpret laws and not to write them. The seven stalwarts chopped a hole in the side of our new initiative the insurance companies could drive an uninsured truck through. This is not the way democracy works. No checks and balances here. Like Joel says, money talks. I hold no hopes for the single-payer health plan. Nationwide, we're talking about a \$270 billion profit for the insurance industry—per year! That's more than just talk.

By the way, I first heard of California's single-payer initiative from this Bleifuss article. Thank you, Joel. I read the *San Bernardino Sun* and the *Los Angeles Times* daily, but didn't see it in either of them. Does that tell you something?

Tom Freeman
Colton, Calif.

God rest ye Marxist-Leninists

Scott McLemee's back-page article on the Marxist-Leninist Party, U.S.A. (*ITT*, March 21) merits a follow-up anecdote. In 1978, I was hanging out in my college town, Charlottesville, Va.—underemployed, doing political work, drinking beer. My roommate and I were part of a tiny progressive political group, Charlottesville Resistance, that started up as an anti-war group and went on to other issues after the Vietnam War.

One evening, I received a telephone call from a representative of the Central Organization of U.S. Marxist-Leninists. They were touring the coun-

try, attempting to forge links with progressives. They wanted to discuss with us "The Question of Social Chauvinism." Well, why not? We had barely heard of the Central Organization of U.S. Marxist-Leninists, but you can't drink beer every night. So we invited them over.

The two pleasant organizers never really defined "social chauvinism"—but no matter how the conversation drifted, they would respond, politely, melodiously, "And that brings us back to the central question of ... social chauvinism."

At one point, we were advised that "at any given historical period, there is always one country that is in the revolutionary vanguard. First, it was the Soviet Union. Then, it was China. And now, it is ... Albania."

Albania! My roommate and I refused to glance at one another, knowing that we would burst out in laughter and embarrass our quirky callers.

Our guests came laden with political material, including Enver Hoxha's collected works. These we avoided purchasing, but we did pick up a few copies of *The Workers' Advocate*. Apparently aware of the paper's turgidity, the editors attempted to spice things up a bit with a song on the back page, the first refrain of which is:

*The U.S. and Russian imperialists
are preparing for world war!
They recruited the O.L. opportunists
to divert the revolutionary storms!
These social chauvinists jumped out
to defend the bourgeoisie!
With their red, white and blue publications
from sea to shining sea!*

For years afterward, we have sung the merry melody to the tune of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," often to the accompaniment of beer. Even today, I sometimes have trouble keeping a straight face in church at Christmastime when this traditional holiday song is sung.

William J. Volont
Dunellen, N.J.

InSHORT



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ANGOLA'S FORGOTTEN WAR

The Cold War rages on in the southern African nation of Angola, the site of a ferocious civil war with roots in the old Soviet-U.S. rivalry. The war has killed an estimated 100,000 people since October



By Woody Igou

A healthier Armageddon

The Boulder, Colo., *Daily Camera* reports that the U.S. Air Force will soon equip its ICBMs with special cooling



systems that do not use chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The stated purpose is to protect the

Earth's ozone layer and to prevent global warming, while carrying as many as 10 nuclear bombs through the atmosphere.

Thank God. Two sunburns in one day would be too much.

Binary death

Big Springs, Texas, resident Karen Lowe has been fighting the Social Security Administration for more than a year



to prove she is not "dead." Government records show she died in February 1985.

Since that time, she has been unable to purchase a car, get credit, open a bank account or get a government loan. "I basically don't exist in a computer world," she laments. *Stop worrying. Go on tour as the "Last Free Human."*

Invaluedictorian

Serbian refugee student Adelina Kabashi was recently ruled ineligible to be valedictorian by the Crawford County Board of Education near Atlanta.



Although she graduated with the highest

grade point average, the parents of the student she beat out complained that her Yugoslavian transcripts, which transferred over, should not count. She came to America because the Serbs "won't allow Albanians to get an education because they don't want us to have a future."

I guess she'll have to find an Albanian-Serb to take to the prom, too.

Pitiful, pitiful

The latest National Rifle Association convention, held in Minneapolis, brought out 20,000 faithful, including Ed Williams.



Williams was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying that the right to

self-defense was a God-given right, explaining that "Jesus said even if you must sell your garment, protect yourself, and work with one hand and carry your sword in the other."

Exactly how many times did Jesus and his disciples use those blades, Mr. Williams?

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Morseperson of the Apocalypse

1992—a terrible blow to a country with a population of 10 million. But the U.S. media has mostly ignored Angola's suffering.

The latest round of fighting—between the government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos (known as the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola [MPLA]) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi—began in the wake of the September 1992 elections.

UNITA, long backed by the U.S. government, suffered a defeat at the polls and took up arms, reigniting a 16-year conflict that has already taken hundreds of thousands of lives. Last year, at the height of the conflict, the U.N.'s representative in Angola, Alioune Blondin Beye, said that figures of 1,000 deaths a day must "be considered conservative." Today the country lies in ruins, and only the efforts of relief organizations have prevented mass starvation.

Despite casualties that rival the war in the former Yugoslavia, where 200,000 people have died, Angola has received only a tiny fraction of the attention afforded Bosnia. Indeed, with the world transfixed on high-profile hot spots such as South Africa and the Occupied Territories, Angola's plight has produced scant media coverage.

In 1993, for example, *Time* and *Newsweek* ran a total of four paragraphs on Angola. A nine-month UNITA siege of the city of Cuito, the capital of Bie province, in which an estimated 30,000 people died, generated only a few lines in major newspapers.

The media's lack of attention to the Angolan conflict is striking, given that the United States is partly responsible for the war. During the Reagan years—and up until 1991—the United States and the government of South Africa provided UNITA with tens of millions of dollars to finance its war with the Cuban and Soviet-backed MPLA government.

In the '80s, Savimbi had powerful friends in Washington—including Sens. Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT), the Heritage Foundation, and the *Washington Times*—who pushed for aid to UNITA. Former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick expressed the sentiments of the UNITA lobby when she remarked in 1986 that Savimbi is "one of the few authentic heroes of our time."

Others disagreed. A 1989 report on Angola by Africa Watch noted that "UNITA has indiscriminately and deliberately attacked and killed civilians in government-controlled areas ... [and] has attacked medical facilities and burned civilian homes." The report called for an end to U.S. aid to the guerrillas.

Africa Watch has accused both sides of human rights violations in the current conflict. But according to Angola expert Shawn McCormick of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., "The group that began the cycle of violence that led to the resumption of the war was UNITA." And in a recent issue of *The New Statesman*, Victoria Brittain, an African specialist based in London, described how UNITA's military strategy prevents aid shipments from reaching besieged areas of the country.

There are some signs of hope. After months of peace talks in Zambia, the two sides are making progress toward a negotiated settlement. As part of the proposed agreement, a United Nations peacekeeping force of 5,000 troops will reportedly be sent to Angola for a period of one and a half to two years. But given UNITA's failure to abide by past agreements, any peace plan must be viewed with skepticism.

—Scott Sherman

CUOMO'S RIGHT TURN

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo is moving to the right in an effort to salvage his troubled 1994 re-election campaign. Cuomo's state-of-the-state address and his budget follow the classic conservative political formula: tax cuts for business and a get-tough attitude on crime and welfare.

With only 34 percent of state residents believing that Cuomo is doing a good job, the man who once called Ronald Reagan's economic policy "survival of the fittest" is now embracing supply-side formulas. On his new agenda are business tax cuts, including the elimination of the 5 percent hotel occupancy tax.

The three-term governor has called for harsh penalties for repeat felons, including a "third time and you're in" plan, in which a three-time felon gets a life sentence without parole. He has also budgeted \$10 million for prison construction.

As for welfare reform, Cuomo has declared, "The Senate Republicans and I agree 100 percent."

"Work is better than welfare," adds Cuomo. Few would disagree. But the big question is where the jobs will come from. Explains Mark Dunlea, head of the statewide Hunger Action Network: "The problem is the economy. [The budget] is not much of a job-creation program, and not enough to raise people out of poverty."

In fact, Cuomo has proposed a number of cuts that hurt the poor. And he has shown a strong willingness to expand the state's electronic fingerprinting program for home-relief clients, which is a hot-button issue for Republicans. Ostensibly, the fingerprinting would clean up fraud. But many honest welfare recipients are likely to drop out of the program, fearing that fingerprinting will be a method to track them in every aspect of their lives.

"Fingerprinting makes criminals out of the poor," says Guida West of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. "It is a policy to scare people, an administrative nightmare and not an effective or humane way to deal with the welfare crisis."

Cuomo's GOP opponent is state Sen. George Pataki. A fiscal conservative with a strong anti-abortion voting record, Pataki is the protégé of Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato. The senator has already given Pataki \$400,000 in campaign funds, a move that drew the wrath of the fair-campaigns group Common Cause. Howard Stern, the controversial shock-radio personality, also appears likely to be on the November ballot as the Libertarian Party nominee. He could turn the race into a real freak show.

—Robert Nixon

MINIMUM WAGE, MAXIMUM IMPACT

When the minimum wage fails to keep up with either inflation or rising productivity, it's not just the very lowest paid workers who suffer, report economists William E. Spriggs and Bruce W. Klein in a new study from the Economic Policy Institute.

Spriggs and Klein found that in determining pay for workers without a college education, employers tend to use certain points of reference. About 40 percent of these jobs, for example, are clustered around the average wage paid

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Barboid

Parents who've been complaining about the implicit sexism of Game Boy, take note. Here comes Barbie Game Girl, a video game starring Guess Who. Barbie has to make her way through a mall, the objective being, of course, Ken. But there's more hopeful news on the Barbie front. The self-proclaimed Barbie Liberation Organization claims to have switched sound chips in Barbie and GI Joe, so that some unsuspecting purchasers have bought Barbies that say, "Eat lead, Cobra!" and "Vengeance is mine!" (Joe says, "Math is hard!")

Electronic redlining?

Phone companies are murmuring soothing guarantees in regulators' ears about the information superhighway having off-ramps in everyone's neighborhood. Of course the phone companies will include everyone—after all, aren't they universal service providers now?

But take a look at what they're proposing to do with their new "video dialtone service"—cable and other video services. A coalition of public interest and consumer groups, led by the Center for Media Education (CME), has found an unmistakable pattern of locating proposed operations in—you guessed it—the plusher parts of town. Phone companies have been righteously denying what CME and its allies are calling "electronic redlining." Some say they're just doing market testing, others point to exceptions to the rule.

Meanwhile, CME and friends are asking the Federal Communications Commission to insist that universal service be a goal at every stage in construction. Better safe than sorry.

Plugged in

If you're waiting to see how new technologies can make a social difference, here's Sassaby Cosmetics to show you. To promote its teen cosmetics line, "Jane," the firm has set up a computer forum on Prodigy. Teens can not only talk about cosmetics but identify their fave social cause and strategize, yes, how to link Sassaby's advertising campaigns to the issue. On the brighter side of the infobahn, you can browse the alternative press' take on new tech communications on a CompuServe account called Future Media Watch (e-mail at 71362,27@compuserve.com or call 202-887-0022); it's part of the Institute for Alternative Journalism, which also publishes *MediaCulture Review*.

And by the way...

If your cable operator hasn't been carrying a grass-roots health care series called "Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired," call them up and say "Galaxy IR(GIR), Transponder 15, horizontal, 4000 down link frequency, at 133 degrees W. longitude." Those are the coordinates for a satellite feed that gets you programs on issues ranging from environmental racism to living with HIV to substance abuse and parenting. Deep Dish (39 Lafayette St., NY NY 10012, 212-473-8933), a collection of video activists, has put it together.

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to non-supervisory workers. But 60 percent of low-skill jobs are clustered around a much lower standard: the minimum wage.

The minimum wage of \$3.35 did not increase from 1979 to 1989, when Congress raised it to recover about half the purchasing power lost in the '80s. Thus, during the '80s the real average for workers clustered around the minimum wage fell from \$7.14 an hour to \$5.78 an hour. By cheapening labor, Spriggs and Klein argue, the Reagan-era minimum wage policy encouraged employers to create more jobs in the low-wage sector. As a result, high school graduates and dropouts not only faced declining real wages but worsening job opportunities.

Although minimum wage workers are disproportionately non-white, female and rural, Spriggs and Klein argue that government statistics seriously understate how many male family breadwinners are paid minimum wages. Minimum wage workers aren't just teenagers earning money for clothes and music; two-thirds of poor minimum-wage workers are the sole earners for their families. And there has been a rapid increase in the percentage of workers who are paid in real terms less than the 1979 minimum wage; 31 percent of black women now fall into this category.

Like several other researchers, Spriggs and Klein found that when the minimum wage increased in 1989, neither levels of employment, prices nor benefits changed significantly in low-wage industries. But wages did increase across the board, even for workers paid above the minimum.

The continued failure to raise the minimum wage depresses earnings and reduces opportunities for a large segment of the American workforce, Klein and Spriggs argue. The social costs of holding down minimum wages thus far exceed the negligible costs of raising the minimum.

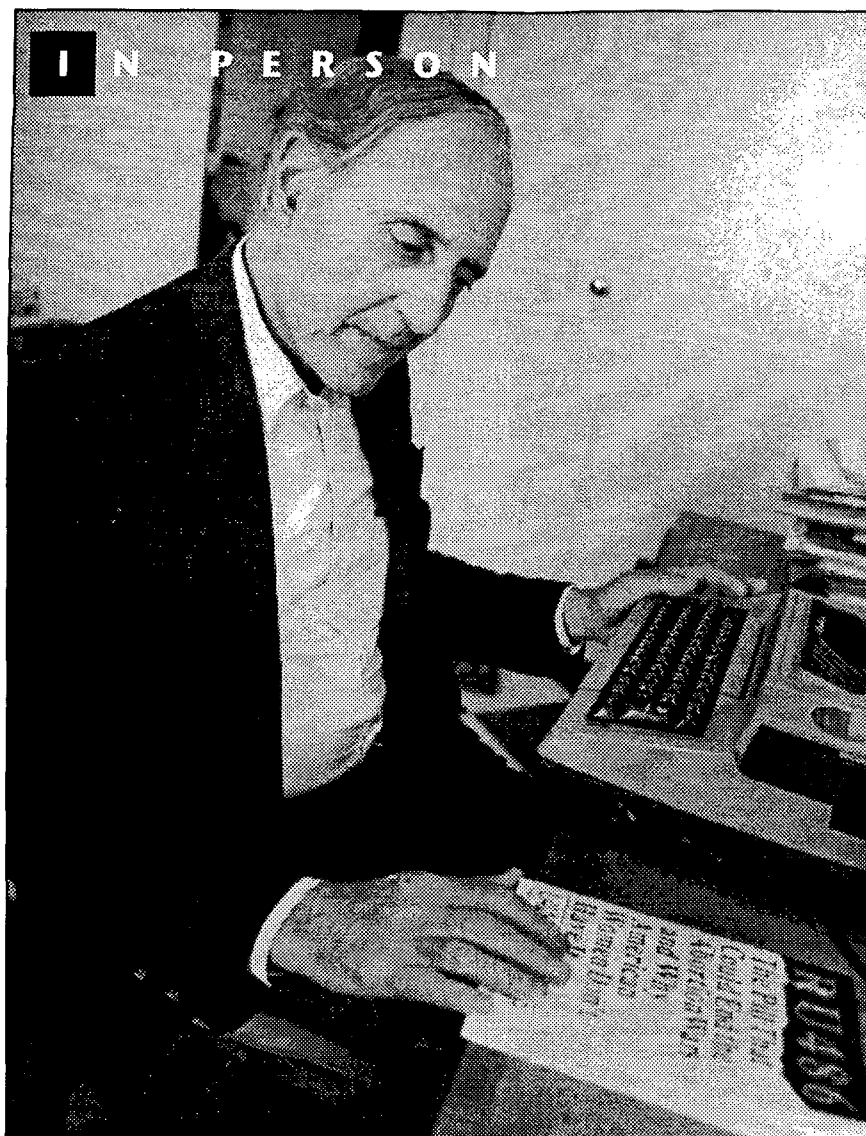
—David Moberg

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner

INVALUABLE COMPROMISES...





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THE MAN IN THE MOVEMENT

Larry Lader's fight for abortion rights

asks. "I was staggered by that word."

The word was "avuncular." Lader does not see himself as the kindly uncle type. On a Saturday morning in his Manhattan apartment he tells me that he is neither especially modest nor quiet, but rather tough, persistent, radical—a street fighter.

In his 1966 book *Abortion*, Lader called for the repeal of abortion laws at a time when few would even broach the subject publicly. Having described a system where women seeking abortion had to either beg permission from all-male hospital committees or take their chances in a violent underworld, Lader became one of the first to systematically refer women to doctors who would perform safe, relatively affordable black-market abortions. In 1969 he helped found the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (then the

Larry Lader is talking about his 30-some years as an abortion rights advocate when he recalls a word *The New Yorker* used recently to describe him. "Did you notice that word?" Lader

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Courting peace

One of the most disturbing legacies of the Cold War is that nearly 50,000 nuclear weapons remain deployed or in storage worldwide. Even if the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) agreements are fully implemented, they would reduce by about a half the number of nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia possess. And that would mean that the two nations would only be left with enough nuclear firepower to blow up the planet 50 times.

Arms-control proponents and non-nuclear countries say that's not good enough. They want to do away with *all* nuclear weapons—and they're going to court in an effort to do it. The World Court that is, formally known as the International Court of Justice. This month the court begins procedure on a case to determine whether nuclear weapons are permitted under international law. If the court agrees to hear the case—and it's under pressure from the United States and other big nuclear nations to refuse—a ruling would be expected some time next year. Would it make any difference if the court declared nuclear weapons to be illegal? Cynics remember a 1985 World Court ruling against the United States for its economic and military destabilization of Nicaragua. The Reagan administration calmly ignored the ruling. Not even proponents think that a World Court decision against nuclear weapons would immediately lead to a nuke-free world. But there is

some reason to believe that such a ruling would have considerable impact. In 1974, for example, Australia and New Zealand took France to the court in an attempt to halt the French government's program of atmospheric nuclear testing in the South Pacific. The case undoubtedly played an important role in France's decision to discontinue its above-ground tests even before the court could rule. Anti-nuclear organizers also point to the Nuremberg principles, which state that military commanders must refuse to carry out orders that violate international law. And such a ruling would also give the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, up for renewal in 1995, a legal basis—which it currently lacks. Moreover, supporters claim, making nuclear weapons illegal would set an important precedent. They point out that legal opinions set the stage for outlawing apartheid, abolishing the slave trade and gaining the emancipation of women. Proponents also point to the relative success of international conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. Of course, the nuclear powers have a vested interest in getting rid of chemical and biological weapons, which are easier for less developed countries to build. Writing in the Sydney, Australia, *Morning Herald*, Christopher Bellamy observes that "[t]he prevalent view [of the nuclear nations] is that in some circumstances it is acceptable to blast, burn or slice people to death while it is never acceptable to poison them, irradiate them or infect them with deadly microbes."

National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws), and lobbied for reform in state legislatures across the country. Lader's wife of 30 years, Joan Summers Lader, remembers a time when their 3-year-old daughter turned to them at the dinner table and asked, "Can we discuss something other than abortion?"

That child is a lawyer now, and her father is still talking about abortion. At 74, Lader is president of a small New York City-based group called Abortion Rights Mobilization (ARM). For the last few years the group has sought to light a fire under the pharmaceutical company Hoechst AG, owner of the abortion pill RU486. Until this past April, the company had refused to allow the drug to be licensed for testing and eventual sale in the United States.

Two summers ago, Lader orchestrated the media splash when Leona Benten carried a dose of RU486 into the United States. More recently, ARM made a bootleg batch of the abortifacient in a secret lab outside New York. In a *New York Times* op-ed piece this March, Lader announced the group's intention to begin testing its own RU486 copy on animals and eventually on women—plans which are now "in abeyance" since Hoechst's subsidiary Roussel Uclaf finally, after 13 months of negotiations, agreed to donate the RU486 patent to the non-profit Population Council for production in the United States.

Asked whether the Clinton administration's vocal support for RU486 influenced ARM's initiative, Lader exclaims with a wave of his hand, "To hell with the administration! It has nothing to do with the movement."

Still, for a hell-raiser, Lader's manner is decorous. More than once he addresses his interviewer as "my dear." He smokes bargain-brand cigarettes, one after the other, with an elegance that eludes the guilt-ridden smokers of a younger generation.

Lader isn't only an agitator for abortion rights. He is also a Harvard man, an informed investor, a lifelong Manhattanite, a small-scale art collector and the son of wealthy New Yorkers whose conservatism he abandoned in his youth.

By profession, Lader is a writer. While working on a biography of birth-control pioneer Margaret Sanger, he drew close to his subject. He even fell in love with her, he says, though their relationship was always platonic. Ten years later, in 1965, Lader wrote his first piece on abortion in *The New York Times Magazine*. Much (though not all) of his writing of the last 30 years has been on abortion or birth control; the struggle for women's procreative freedom can fairly be called his life's work. Had it not been, Lader remarks, he might have written more, and better. And when he says this, his angular features soften and for a moment he looks as though he is contemplating a loss.

Lader is not sure why he, as a man, had been so passionate about abortion rights. Was it the influence of Sanger? Rebellion against his parents? The Vassar girls he used to hang out with?

Whatever the case, perceiving the importance of abortion (and, as early as the '60s, the potential for an abortifacient pill) has been Lader's intellectual and journalistic triumph. Given his early and long involvement, one wonders why his name isn't more familiar. "It should be," suggests Molly Yard, former head of the National Organization for Women, who adds that feminists do Lader a disservice by not fully recognizing his contributions.

What will Lader do now that Hoechst has promised to relinquish the RU 486 patent? He chuckles. "It gives you a newsworthy lead, but of course it doesn't solve the whole problem. There are a lot of complicated steps still to go."

—Katharine Greider

THE FIRST STONE

Crime of the FinCENtury

By Joel Bleifuss

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), a division of the Treasury Department, has a stated mission "to provide a government-wide, multi-source intelligence and analytical network to support law enforcement and regulatory agencies in the detection, investigation and prosecution of financial crimes." FinCEN's wide-ranging computer capabilities make it all but impossible for criminals to hide their ill-gotten gains through money laundering.

This secretive agency has enjoyed great success employing its vast databases and its artificial intelligence capabilities to ferret out drug traffickers, terrorists and spies. (See "The First Stone," May 30.) FinCEN, with proper authorization, has access to almost *any* financial transaction involving U.S. banks. In addition, FinCEN has access to the Internal Revenue Service's Currency and Banking Database, which includes 50 million currency transaction reports covering financial transactions of \$10,000 or more.

The Treasury Department, however, has apparently decided not to use FinCEN's capabilities to track down money that was laundered by the well-heeled crooks who in the '80s looted the S&Ls—a crime Americans will be paying for into the next century. According to a recent report FinCEN filed with Congress, the agency has "received four requests for assistance in connection with the investigation of savings and loan institutions" since FinCEN's founding in April 1990—and none of those were from Treasury.

The Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC)—which Congress established in 1989 to recover assets from failed thrifts after the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) proved unable to do the job—reports that from 1989 to 1993, taxpayer losses resulting from the S&L failures it handled totalled \$84.2 billion, not counting interest. And that doesn't take into account the billions in S&L losses that occurred prior to 1989. When all RTC and FDIC accounts are settled, according to the *Stanford Law and Policy Review*, the cost of the S&L crisis could add up to \$1.4 trillion.

Apologists argue that much of the money is irretrievable. They claim that it was speculated away in real estate deals that later went bust, or that it was lost with the fall in oil prices, or eaten up by the high interest rates of the '80s, or frittered away by S&L execs living high on the hog. But some portion of those billions was also undoubtedly hidden from federal authorities, laundered in offshore foreign banks by the directors and officers of the failed S&Ls or surreptitiously handed off to family members. In other words, the money was stolen.

An April RTC report plays down the role of fraud in the S&L crisis, citing as proof a Bush administration study of 1990, which claimed that fraud accounted

for only 10 to 15 percent of the losses. This seems highly unlikely. As then-FBI director William Sessions told the House Banking Committee in 1990, "Experience demonstrates that insider abuse is a major factor in almost all of our investigations involving failed financial institutions."

The RTC's Professional Liability Program is charged with the task of recovering S&L losses from the individuals—accountants, lawyers and thrift officers—responsible for failed S&Ls. As of March 31, the RTC's Professional Liability Program had recovered \$942 million. Those millions are only a small percentage of the \$84.2 billion in S&L losses that the RTC says taxpayers will have to make up. And of that \$942 million, only \$151 million was recovered from the directors and officers of the failed thrifts.

No state suffered more S&L failures than Texas. In fact, about 41 percent of the \$84.2 billion in taxpayer bailouts that the RTC oversees will go to Texas thrifts. In effect, the Texas financial community got its bread buttered by both the S&L meltdown and bailout. Yet only \$11 million (or roughly 1 percent) of the \$942 million so far recouped by the Professional Liability Program has been recovered from the directors and officers of failed Texas S&Ls.

According to the April RTC report, this performance "does not imply an inadequate professional liability effort." Tom Burnside, a former lawyer in the RTC's Dallas office, disagrees. He points to 50 Texas S&Ls—he calls them the "forgotten 50"—which cost taxpayers \$11.7 billion. He says that the RTC, in its efforts to get back some of that \$11.7 billion, has issued only 27 subpoenas and, to date, has recovered only \$42,000 from S&L insiders.

As Burnside explains: "The RTC failed to issue even a single subpoena in its investigation of 86 of the 137 of the failed Texas S&Ls. The entire Houston office of the RTC issued only three subpoenas in its investigation of 37 failed S&Ls." By contrast, he notes, "the Whitewater special prosecutor has issued over 160 grand jury subpoenas just on tiny Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan."

Are Texans especially blessed? No, just particularly well

connected. From 1985 to 1988 the U.S. treasury secretary was Texan James Baker. From 1988 to 1992 the president was Texan George Bush. And since 1992 the treasury secretary has been Texan Lloyd Bentsen.

The Reagan and Bush administrations' blatant failure to prosecute the S&L crooks has been well established. (See "The First Stone," June 6, 1990). But an optimist might have hoped that the Clinton administration would clean up the mess. After all, as Rep. Joseph Kennedy (D-MA) has aptly observed, the S&L bailout is "the greatest single transfer of wealth from poor to rich in the history of our nation."

While the Clinton administration's record is better than that of its predecessors, it is nevertheless abysmal, thanks to former S&L owner Bentsen. He both oversees the agency that is in charge of recovering S&L funds, the RTC, and has personal and political connections to the S&L officials who are being, or have been, investigated.

William Greider reported in *Who Will Tell the People?* that when Michael Dukakis tried to make the S&L crisis a campaign issue, he was dissuaded from doing so by his running mate Bentsen, who "communicated to campaign headquarters that this was not going to be a winning issue for their ticket."

It certainly wasn't a winning issue for Bentsen. Like Bush, Bentsen has a son who got rich at the S&L trough. And, as journalist Pete Brewton notes in his 1992 book *The Mafia, CIA and George Bush*, a key figure in the S&L scandal in Texas, Walter Mischer, was a political backer of both Bush and Bentsen. In 1980, Mischer raised \$3 million for the Reagan-Bush campaign. The following year he helped raise \$750,000 at one dinner for Bentsen.

Apparently Bentsen believes there are more pressing needs than recovering the S&L loot. In fact, Bentsen has argued that no purpose would be served by reopening S&L cases that might have been prematurely closed in the previous administration. And, as Michael Lewis reported last year in *The New Republic*, Bentsen's RTC sent officials to a House Judiciary Committee hearing to help Democratic Rep. Jack Brooks (you guessed it: a Texan) and the Republican minority on the committee defeat a measure that would have extended the statute of limitations on S&L fraud from three years to five years.

Consequently, many of the crooks got away. "Somewhere, somehow, this thing got shut down," said Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) at a Banking Committee

hearing last fall. "I am not one of those who leaps to theories, but I think it is one of the great untold, as yet unfully discovered and written about cover-ups."

As Senate Banking Committee Chairman Don Riegle (D-MI) remarked at the same hearing: "A lot of those [S&L] directors are high-profile people. They are prominent people. They are politically active people. And so if you go out and throw the net out and grab that crowd, you set off all kinds of shock waves, all kinds of repercussions."

Take the case of Joe Russo, the owner of a failed Texas thrift, Ameriway Savings. Russo borrowed tens of millions from S&Ls that subsequently failed—then transferred his assets to his children before declaring bankruptcy, according to Brewton. Ameriway is one of former RTC attorney Burnside's "forgotten 50." According to Burnside, no money was ever recovered from Ameriway, nor did the federal government issue any subpoenas to find out where the money went. Russo—who according to Brewton was investigated by the feds but never charged—is, as it happens, a good friend of both Bentsen and Bush.

Did Russo launder his ill-gotten gains? Lloyd Bentsen's Treasury Department could search the financial information contained in the FinCEN databases to find out. Apparently it has not done so.

The capability is there. What is lacking is the will. ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



ARMS CONTROL

Armed and dangerous

From Rwanda to Los Angeles, small arms may pose the greatest threat to peace in the post-Cold War era.

By Michael T. Klare

For most of the past 40 years, international arms-control efforts have generally focused on the largest and most potent weapons systems: intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear missile submarines, nuclear bombers and so on. But now, in one of the most striking developments of the post-Cold War era, arms-control experts are beginning to worry about the smallest and least sophisticated weapons, such as guns, grenades, mortars and landmines. Once considered irrelevant to the strategic calculus that defined international politics, such weapons are now seen as a major factor in the global outbreak of ethnic and communal warfare.

At the height of the Cold War, it was widely assumed that any major war would be decided by which side made more and better tanks, artillery pieces, warplanes and other "heavy"

weapons. Today, however, many conflicts are being decided by sniper guns, assault rifles, mortars and other "light" weapons. Such weapons do not have the capacity to destroy a large and modern army, as the United States did in Operation Desert Storm, but *are* capable of depopulating rural areas, leveling villages and inflicting huge numbers of civilian casualties.

The current fighting in Rwanda provides a tragic case in point. Although the major factions are reported to possess a handful of heavy artillery pieces, almost all of the killing—as *In These Times* went to press, fatalities were estimated to have reached 500,000—has been conducted with machine guns, assault rifles, mortars and landmines. According to researchers from Human Rights Watch, both the Rwandan Army and the rebel forces have acquired large numbers of such weapons from foreign suppliers in the past few years.

A similar pattern can be seen in Kashmir and Sri Lanka, where brutal conflicts involving many thousands of soldiers on each side have been sustained for years by foreign deliveries of light weapons. In Bosnia, the heavy fighting around Sarajevo and Gorazde has entailed the use of tanks and heavy artillery, but most of the smaller battles and "ethnic cleansing" campaigns—not to mention the daily sniping—have been conducted with small arms.

The situation is all the more disturbing because there are no international controls on the spread of guns and other light weapons. Many millions of such weapons are sold through legitimate commercial channels every year, and millions more are transferred through black-market channels that reach into every corner of the globe. Surplus Cold War weapons, of both Eastern and Western manufacture, are available on a worldwide basis from black-market dealers at a fraction of their original purchase price. Yet the major arms-producing nations—including the United States—are continuing to pour new weapons into international markets, thus increasing the global glut in military firearms.

Unlike nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and ballistic missiles—whose export is banned by international treaties and agreements—small arms are seen as normal trade items and are sold openly through standard commercial channels. Most states also distinguish between "major" conventional weapons (tanks, planes, warships and so on), which are usually subjected to rigorous export controls, and light weapons, which generally receive little attention from customs officials. As a result, guns, mines and mortars move relatively freely from country to country, and belligerents experience little difficulty in building up substantial arsenals.

Moreover, technical advances have led to a steady increase in the lethality and destructiveness of light weapons.



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The international arms market made Rwanda's holocaust possible.

have also increased the killing power of handguns, shotguns, mines and grenades.

In many ways, the unchecked proliferation of small arms worldwide is similar to what Americans face in their own communities. Decades of neglect and warped priorities have produced an explosive profusion of modern firearms—resulting, in many cases, in higher levels of ethnic, religious and criminal violence. The rising curve of human casualties generated by such violence is the same in Los Angeles, Moscow, Bombay and Mogadishu.

The similarity between the domestic and international front also extends to the seriousness (or lack thereof) with which the gun trade is being treated by policy-makers. U.S. lawmakers have been slow to impose any sort of restrictions on domestic gun sales—and global policy-makers are only now beginning to talk about the need for international controls. In neither case is significant progress expected in the immediate future.

The problem is not simply a lack of political

Modern assault guns, for instance, can fire a burst of 30-35 rounds with one pull of the trigger (rather than one round, as with older, bolt-action rifles)—thus making possible the recent Hebron mosque massacre by an Israeli settler who allegedly used a 35-round Galil assault gun. Manufacturers

will. There is also a dearth of reliable information on the global trade in light weapons. Because this trade was long considered a trivial matter by world leaders, very little effort was made by academic and governmental experts to collect and analyze data on this topic. For example, the leading



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There are as many as 100 million guns in circulation in the United States.

non-governmental source on arms issues—the *SIPRI Yearbook* (published annually by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)—includes data on trade in only “major” weapons systems.

Fortunately, however, a number of groups have recently begun to fill this informational vacuum. In February, for instance, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences convened a two-day workshop on the global trade in light weapons, designed to survey the current status of research in the field. And the first full-scale study of anti-personnel landmines was recently published by the Arms Project of Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Physicians for Human Rights. (For an in-depth look at the landmine crisis, see *In These Times*, Sept. 6, 1993.)

Such efforts, while preliminary, enable us to begin sketching out the nature and scope of the light weapons traffic, and to consider means for its control.

It is impossible to determine how many light weapons

are sold in any given year, because no governmental or non-governmental organization compiles such information. But it is possible to obtain a rough indication of the value of such sales through extrapolation from other data. A rough estimate is that total world exports of light weapons come to about \$5 billion per year.

Given the costs of much conventional weaponry, \$5 billion may not seem like much: top-of-the-line jet fighters cost \$50 million each and modern tanks are \$2 million each. But because light weapons cost so much less per item than heavy weapons, \$5 billion represents an enormous sum. Just \$1 billion, for instance, would be enough to buy 4 million AK-47s (at the going rate of about \$250 each) or 333 million Chinese Type-72A anti-personnel landmines (at \$3 each).

Even relatively small amounts spent on light weapons can have significant consequences. Thus, in a recent report on arms sales to Rwanda, the Arms Project of Human Rights Watch documented a \$6 million 1992 weapons sale by Egypt to the Rwandan government that included 70 light mortars, 10,000 high-explosive mortar shells, 2,000 RPG-7

rocket-propelled grenades, 2,000 MAT-79 landmines, 450 Egyptian-made AK-47s and 3 million rounds of ammunition. It is these weapons, and others like them obtained from France and South Africa, that have been used in the Rwandan bloodshed over the past few weeks.

One thing is certain: the world is awash with light weapons of all types, and their numbers are increasing all the time. According to some estimates, there are over 100 million guns in circulation in the United States alone. And the United Nations estimates that there are some 100 million landmines now emplaced in the ground in 62 nations around the world, with more being added all the time. These weapons are producing fresh victims on a daily basis.

Light weapons are traded through a wide variety of international channels:

◦ **Government-to-government transfers:** Along with transfers of heavy weapons, supplier states often sell or give small arms and other light weapons to their allies and clients. Each year the U.S. government sells millions of dollars' worth of such hardware to friendly governments through its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, and gives away comparable amounts through its Military Assistance Program (MAP) and Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program.

Government-to-government sales and aid programs represent a major source of light weapons for governments, especially for those facing ethnic or internal wars within their territory. To give just one telling example: the United States provided Somalia (during the 1969-1991 rule of Mo-

ammed Siad Barre) with 4,800 M-16 rifles, 448 TOW anti-tank missiles, 75 81mm mortars, 24 .50-caliber Browning machine guns and \$9.5 million worth of ammunition. Now warring Somali factions are using these weapons against U.N. peacekeeping troops and each other. Such situations frustrate even some in the arms industry. "It's been our position for a long time that our government has been giving these weapons to a lot of people they shouldn't be giving them to," Andy Molchan, director of the National Association of Federally Licensed Firearms Dealers, told *In These Times*. "There are a lot of shoddy dictators who are armed to the teeth—and the only way they could get these weapons was from a government, primarily the United States, Britain, France or Russia."

Although U.S. aid programs have declined since the end of the Cold War, Washington continues to sell or transfer light weapons to other governments engaged in civil conflicts, including Colombia, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines and Turkey.

◦ **Commercial sales:** Governments aren't the only arms dealers, of course. Most countries allow military firms within their borders to export weapons to foreign customers—whether states or private arms dealers—through normal trade channels, so long as they obtain the necessary export permits. In the United States, direct corporate sales of this sort are termed "commercial sales" and require an export license from the Center for Defense Trade (CDT) in the State Department. Typically, light weapons constitute a large pro-

Small isn't beautiful: inappropriate technologies

There is no precise definition for light weapons. In general, light weapons include all conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or by a light vehicle.

The distinction between light and heavy weapons can also be made in operational terms. Heavy weapons typically require an elaborate logistical and maintenance capability that can be provided only by professional military organizations with sufficient technical experience—in other words, by the armed forces of established states. Light weapons, on the other hand, can be employed by insurgent groups and paramilitary formations that lack the logistical infrastructure of a professional military force; for this very reason, they are the preferred munitions of guerrillas.

Light weapons in demand by both military and paramilitary forces can be divided into several major categories:

- **Assault rifles:** Infantry rifles that automatically load and fire a burst of bullets (supplied from a detachable magazine) when the trigger is pulled. Popular models include the Soviet AK-47 and its successor, the AKM; the U.S. M-16; the German G-3; the Belgian FAL and FNC; the Chinese Type-56 (a copy of the AK-47); and the Israeli Galil (also an AK-47 copy).
- **Machine guns:** Rapid-fire guns that spew out a steady stream of bullets; can be mounted on a tripod for use by infantry or affixed to a tank or vehicle. Popular models include the U.S. M-2 and M-60, the German MG3, the Soviet PKS and the Belgian MAG.
- **Bazookas and light anti-tank weapons:** Various light infantry weapons used against tanks, vehicles and fortified positions, including grenade launchers, recoilless rifles, rockets and anti-tank missiles. Popular models include the Soviet RPG-2 and RPG-7 portable rocket launchers (and their Chinese variants, Type 56 and 69); the U.S. M20 and M72 rocket launchers and Dragon and TOM anti-tank missiles; and the Franco-German MILAN anti-tank missile.
- **Shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles:** Self-guided missiles that maneuver in flight to strike low-flying aircraft and helicopters. Popular models include: the U.S. Stinger, the British Blowpipe, the Soviet SAM-7 and the Swedish RBS-70.
- **Anti-personnel landmines:** Small explosive devices placed in the ground that are triggered when stepped on—causing death or severe injury. Popular models include the U.S. M18A1 "Claymore," the Chinese Type 72A and PMN, and the Belgian PRB 409.

(Sources: *Jane's Infantry Weapons*; E. Ezell, *Small Arms of the World*, 12th ed.)

—M.T.K.



ton's recent ban on the import of some Chinese-made weapons will put only a small dent in this trade.

• **Covert deliveries by governments:** In addition to their above-board sales to other governments, many countries provide weapons through covert channels to ethnic and insurgent groups in other nations. Throughout the Cold War, for example, both the United States and the Soviet Union regularly provided light weapons to insurgent forces around the world. During the Reagan era, such covert—and sometimes illegal—transfers became top policy priorities, as the administration sought to bring down Soviet-backed govern-

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Light weaponry has been central to the war in Bosnia.

portion of the \$4-6 billion in weaponry sold each year through these channels.

Although government-to-government sales remain the dominant channel for global

arms trafficking, commercial sales are growing in proportion as major supplier countries—including Russia, Ukraine, China and the Eastern European states—privatize their arms enterprises and encourage sales on the international market.

With the sharp drop in domestic military spending, the pressure on newly privatized Russian firms to increase their export sales is fierce—resulting in many transactions of an illegal or dubious nature (such as sales to the belligerents in the former Yugoslavia). China, in the throes of a historic shift to capitalism, is also privatizing its arms factories and stressing foreign sales. As a result of all this, arms buyers around the world are grabbing up huge quantities of Chinese and Soviet bloc weapons at bargain-basement prices. President Clin-

ments in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Libya and Nicaragua through covert arms deliveries to anti-communist guerrillas. So abundant was this assistance that the various Afghan factions and UNITA rebels in Angola have been able to keep fighting for years after the cessation of U.S. aid with arms stockpiled during the Reagan period—producing hundreds of thousands of casualties in the process. (See story on page 6.)

Superpower intervention of this sort has largely disappeared, but other governments have begun playing a more

Light reading

For further information:

- *Landmines: A Deadly Legacy and Arming Rwanda*, both from the Arms Project of Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017.
- *Cascade of Arms: Controlling Conventional Weapons Proliferation in the 1990s*, from the Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036.
- *And Weapons for All*, by William Hartung, from HarperCollins Publishers, 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022.
- *The International Trade in Light Weapons*, forthcoming this fall from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, MA 02138.
- "Arming Ethnic Conflict," by Aaron Karp, from *Arms Control Today*, September 1993.
- On the landmines campaign: contact Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, 2001 "S" St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.
- On the proposed "Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers Act": contact Peace Action, 1819 H. St. NW, Washington, DC 20006.

—M.T.K.

active role: Pakistan, for instance, is thought to be arming separatist forces in Kashmir, while Iran has been accused of arming Kurdish separatists in Turkey, as well as Islamic militants in Lebanon and Sudan. Similarly, Uganda is reported to be aiding the anti-government forces in Rwanda, and Burkino Faso has been accused of supplying arms to the rebel forces of Charles Taylor in Liberia.

◉**Black-market sales:** Paralleling all of these channels is the global black market in light weapons. Greatly expanded in recent years, black-market arms traffic has emerged as a major factor in clashes in the former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union, the Horn of Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. It is impossible to put a dollar value on such sales, but many black-market transactions run into the millions of dollars and involve large quantities of arms and ammunition.

All of these channels of trade add up to a massive and hugely destructive international market for light weapons. Each day in conflicts across the globe, thousands of people die—most of them non-combatants. And many survivors are left with wounds—missing limbs, paralysis, blindness, despair—that make them unable to assist their families and villages, thus placing added burdens on the world's overstretched humanitarian aid infrastructure.

But the cost to the international community extends far beyond this. At a time when the world is finding it increasingly difficult to control the spread of ethnic and communal warfare, the world's arms suppliers are making it easier and easier for potential belligerents to conduct wars of increasing scope, duration and intensity. This, perhaps more than anything else, is the lesson of Bosnia, Kashmir and Sri Lanka: so long as belligerents can obtain the guns and ammunition with which to carry on their crusades, the ability of outsiders to stem the bloodshed will be limited.

And there is an added element to this dilemma: As more and more weapons fall into the hands of paramilitary groups and forces, it will prove increasingly difficult for peacekeeping forces—whether under U.N., NATO or U.S. auspices—to disarm warring factions and establish a modicum of peace.

Nowhere was this more evident than in Somalia, where U.S. soldiers' confrontations with an armed and angry populace ultimately ended in tragedy and failure. Worse, as a result of the Somalia experience, the United States and many other nations have begun to shy away from international peacekeeping responsibilities. Thus, the world's ability to cope with ethnic warfare has become that much more diminished.

Clearly, the world cannot hope to make progress in overcoming the challenge of contemporary conflict so long as likely belligerents are able to arm themselves with ease. Yet controlling the international gun trade will not be easy. Most governments view guns and ammunition as legitimate trade commodities that should not be interfered with, and the gunmakers themselves can be expected to oppose any infringements on their ability to export their products to lu-

crative foreign markets. But as ordinary citizens and their elected representatives become more aware of the catastrophic consequences of unregulated gun sales (whether at home or abroad), it will become easier to adopt multilateral controls on the trade in such products.

A very significant precedent for such measures was established last year when Congress voted a three-year ban on the export of anti-personnel landmines. Although the United States is not the leading supplier of such munitions, U.S. action in this regard will demonstrate the *possibility* of such restraints and put pressure on other suppliers to curb their own sales. Indeed, an international coalition of human rights and humanitarian organizations—including the International Red Cross and, in this country, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation—has been established to promote a permanent international ban on landmine production and sales.

The next step will be to impose restraints on other types of light weapons. A full-scale ban is unlikely, for all sorts of reasons, but arms-control experts think it's possible to retard the flow of certain categories of weapons and to restrict their sale to potential belligerents. Much more could be done, moreover, to enforce existing (and future) U.N. embargoes on arms transfers to outlawed regimes and armies, and to suppress the black-market trade in firearms.

The United States can assume further leadership in this area by adopting the proposed Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers Act (S.1677, HR.3538), which would ban exports to nations at war and to prominent human rights violators.

The development and imposition of such controls will require determination and creativity. It will not occur overnight. But the world has made significant progress in stemming the flow of nuclear and chemical munitions, and is certainly capable of controlling other types of weapons. Such efforts may, indeed, prove the most important non-proliferation task of the early 21st century. ◀

Michael T. Klare is a professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. He is the author of *American Arms Supermarket* and several other books.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Unclean bill of health

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An EPA reassessment of the dangers of dioxin is not likely to please American industry.

By David Moberg

Dioxin has long been a focus of controversy. In 1984, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared this byproduct of industrial chlorine-based processes and of waste incineration to be "the most potent animal carcinogen" that the agency had ever evaluated. But in 1991 industry groups claimed that dioxin was less toxic than had first been believed, and demanded that the EPA conduct a reassessment of dioxin's dangers.

A final version of that three-year reassessment is due to be released this month. But it is unlikely to please industry leaders. A draft of the risk-assessment report concludes that not only is dioxin likely to be a major source of cancers but also that it can seriously damage the human immune, endocrine and reproductive systems, increasing vulnerability to

illnesses and reducing biological vitality.

In addition, dioxin can deform human organs, alter behavior (for example, disrupting children's learning and development), and cause lasting genetic damage. Even the minute levels of dioxin now found in the average person can be dangerous, but humans are especially vulnerable during certain "windows of opportunity," such as shortly before or after birth.

Dioxin, like nearly 50 other related chemicals, acts as a "growth disregulator," explains Linda Birnbaum, director of the EPA's environmental toxicology division and principal author of the draft risk-assessment chapter. "What dioxin does is alter the growth or differentiation of cells. If you use the analogy of a complex electrical network, throw dioxin in and it shorts out in all directions. We have a cascade of alterations," as the body's self-regulating systems are thrown out of balance.

The EPA report reaffirms dioxin's standing as one of the most dangerous substances on earth, describing it as "extremely potent

in producing a variety of effects ... at levels hundreds or thousands of times lower than most chemicals of environmental interest."

Dioxin's non-cancer effects have emerged in recent years as particularly worrisome. By disrupting the immune system, for example, dioxin can both reduce the body's resistance to many illnesses and trigger auto-immune disorders, like asthma and diabetes. Dioxin, the EPA concludes, can disrupt the reproductive system to produce results ranging from reduced sperm count among men to endometriosis, a painful condition afflicting nearly 10 percent of women of reproductive age.

The EPA also concludes that dioxin, a known cancer-causing agent in rats and hamsters, is also likely to be carcinogenic for humans. Technically, the report does not describe dioxin as a "known" human carcinogen—largely because of limits on the study of humans, who cannot be used as test subjects. But the weight of the evidence suggests that "dioxin is a multi-organ carcinogen," argues Richard Clapp, a Boston University public health researcher who studies the human health effects of Agent Orange, a dioxin-laced defoliant used by U.S. troops in Vietnam.

The EPA report does describe dioxin as a likely or probable human carcinogen, and refers to two different scientific models of potential cancer effects. These models suggest that dioxin may account for somewhere between 2.5 percent and 25 percent of all human cancers in the United States, according to Peter Montague of the Environmental Research Foundation. "Tobacco is the only other substance identified with that large a number of cancers," he says. "If these cancer



numbers turn out to be correct, they've found a major source of cancer in the industrialized world."

As Montague interprets the report, the "safe" level of dioxin intake, with respect to cancer risk, is at least 300 to 600 times less than what the average person now receives. For the range of non-cancer hazards, exposure should be at least 10 to 100 times less than people now receive on average. And many Americans are at far above average risk—such as workers in certain industries and people living near incinerators, as well as Native Americans and other rural poor people who eat dioxin-tainted fish from polluted rivers.

Getting a firm fix on the effects of dioxin is tough. Dioxin creates a "plethora" of effects, the EPA draft reports, and all dioxin-like chemicals have cumulative, similar effects. Furthermore, these chemicals often interact with each other or with other substances in the body in ways that com-

pound the dangers. Dr. Arnold Schechter, a dioxin expert at the State University of New York at Binghamton, argues that even the best risk assessments "don't deal with the combinational and promotional effects" of dioxin.

While much remains to be discovered, it is clear that dioxin presents a major hazard. Environmentalists believe the study indicates that no additional release of dioxins into the environment is tolerable. But that would mean dramatically changing the technologies of many major industries, such as papermaking (which creates dioxins during the bleaching process). It would also mean shutting down most waste incinerators, and eliminating a wide range of industrial chemicals and plastics.

Environmentalists want the EPA to use its policies on lead—another persistent toxin that accumulates in human and animal tissues—as a model for dealing with dioxin. That would mean tracking down every source of dioxin and elimi-

nating it, without debates over the relative risk of each source.

For its part, industry is not contesting the EPA conclusions head-on. Indeed, the Chemical Manufacturers Association has acknowledged that "the reassessment will show that the margin of safety [in current regulations of dioxin] is probably narrower than the [EPA] would like." The association also has conceded that there is "a need to act, specifically, to further reduce exposure to dioxin." But the chemical industry is opposed to outright bans on dioxin, arguing instead for tighter emission controls.

Yet the report has implications far beyond the chemical and paper industries. The EPA asserts that 90 percent of the dioxin humans consume comes through food, especially meat, fish and dairy products. Perhaps most worrisome is the danger posed to nursing infants, who receive significant doses of dioxin transmitted through their mothers' milk. Within the first year of life infants may receive from 4 to 12 percent of their lifetime exposure to dioxin.

Thus the food and agribusiness industries, including their federal regulators, are worried about how the public will react to this bad news. Likewise, city governments and hospitals, along with commercial waste disposal companies, are likely to be unhappy that the EPA report has cited their incinerators as major sources of dioxin.

Rather than argue the science, industry now is likely to resort to threats of huge costs and job losses if the sources of dioxin are cut off. In many cases, industries will try to claim that better pollution controls are reasonable alternatives to

bans or fundamental changes in production processes.

For example, the paper industry has been promoting the use of chlorine dioxide as an alternative to elemental chlorine. Although chlorine dioxide yields fewer dioxins, a recent study by a big Swedish paper company showed that the waste discharges of chlorine-free mills were dramatically less toxic than effluent from mills using either chlorine or chlorine dioxide. The EPA's proposed paper mill standards identify chlorine dioxide as the best available technology, yet those mills are unlikely to be able to meet the standards the regulations set. While big U.S. companies resist chlorine-free production—which could both eliminate dioxin entirely and boost efficiency—totally chlorine-free paper is rapidly becoming the dominant product in Germany and other parts of Europe.

EPA scientists have shown courage in their unflinching but measured presentation of the dangers of dioxin. But there are widespread worries that the Clinton administration will not be willing to act forcefully on this evidence. If the EPA takes its own dioxin reassessment seriously, then it will have to proceed with the strategy it proposed for renewal of the Clean Water Act—studying how to phase out chlorine. Yet the chemical industry claims to have generated 1 million letters to state and federal officials opposing such a policy, which Congress dropped from the legislation in committee. The environmentalists may have won on scientific points in the dioxin reassessment. Winning politically will prove tougher. ◀

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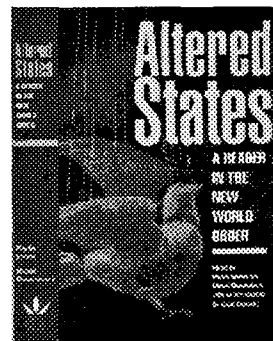
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THE PRESIDENCY

Nixon's October Surprise

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*New
evidence
sheds light on
a 1968
campaign ploy
to delay the
end of the
Vietnam war.*

By Jack Colhoun

With his death Richard Nixon accomplished one of the greatest feats of legerdemain in his long political career. Nixon was rehabilitated in an extraordinary exercise in historical revisionism, aided and abetted by the Washington establishment and the mainstream news media. Praise for the former president in the media was relentless.

The man who ordered B-52 bombers to rain death and terror from the skies over Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in an unprecedentedly savage but doomed effort to stave off defeat metamorphosed into one of the 20th century's great "statesmen." Watergate was reduced to a mere blemish. The dead

Nixon was, indeed, a new Nixon.

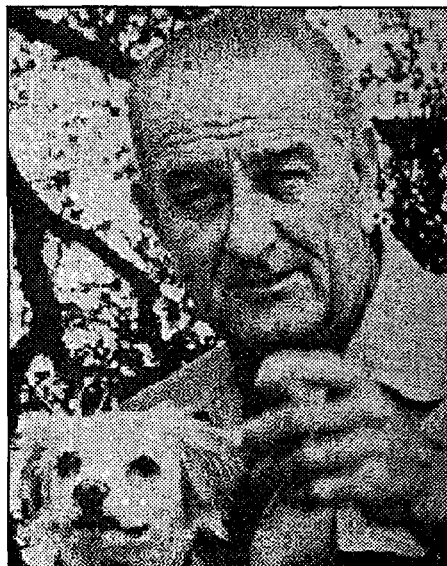
Nonetheless, new disclosures about the old Nixon appeared within days of Nixon's burial with the publication of *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House*. The diaries of H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's White House chief of staff, refocus attention on one of Nixon's darkest deeds: the "October Surprise" of 1968 in which then-candidate Nixon teamed up with Nguyen Van Thieu, the U.S.-backed strongman in South Vietnam, to sabotage the Paris peace talks, thus helping to ensure Nixon's victory over Hubert Humphrey in the 1968 presidential election.

The Haldeman Diaries is the latest in a series of books written over the last 15 years by knowledgeable insiders—including Nixon—that have described various aspects of the 1968 episode. But thus far, the Washington press corps and mainstream historians have largely ignored the story. What follows is the first attempt to bring those disparate details, including the ones provided by Haldeman, together in an exploration the larger implications of the event.

Haldeman's diary entries for Jan. 11-12, 1973, describe how Nixon tried to blackmail former President Lyndon Johnson by threatening to expose LBJ's potentially controversial bugging of the South Vietnamese Embassy in Washington five years earlier. That bugging allowed LBJ to learn that then-presidential candidate Nixon was using Anna Chennault, a GOP operative with covert connections, as a clandestine channel to Thieu. According to her own memoirs, Chennault was able to persuade Thieu to pull out of peace talks in Paris. The move undermined Johnson's dramatic Oct. 31, 1968, diplomatic initiative in which he

stopped all U.S. bombing of the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam.

In 1973, Nixon threatened to go public about the Johnson administration surveillance unless LBJ used "his influence to turn off" the Capitol Hill investigation of the Watergate scandal, according to the Haldeman diaries. But Johnson "got very hot," according to the Haldeman diaries, and promised he would





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"release [deleted material—national security], saying that our side was asking that certain things be done," Haldeman noted.

There is little doubt that Haldeman's January 1973 diary entries are about the October Surprise of 1968, despite the national security censor's deletions. He even makes specific reference to the 1968 bugging of "the Dragon Lady," whom he identifies as "Mrs. Anna Chennault."

In her memoirs, *The Education of Anna Chennault*, Chennault recalled that she was asked by the Nixon campaign in early 1968 to set up a meeting between Nixon and Bui Diem, Thieu's ambassador in Washington. Nixon told Diem, "If I should be elected the next president, you can rest assured I will have a meeting with your leader and find a solution to winning this war," Chennault recalled. The Chinese-born Chennault was the widow of Lt. Gen. Claire Chennault, whose Civil Air Transport, a CIA proprietary, flew logistical support missions for U.S. covert operations in China and Southeast Asia in the '50s.

Nixon informed Diem, "Anna is my good friend," according to Chennault. "I know you also consider her a friend, so please rely on her from now on as the only contact between myself and your government. If you have any message for me, please give it to Anna and she will relay it to me and I will do the same in the future."

Former Nixon campaign official and Nixon White House speechwriter William Safire described the excitement in the Nixon camp about the Chennault channel in *Before*

the Fall, his memoirs of the Nixon years. Nixon campaign aide Richard Allen told Nixon in a July 23, 1968, memorandum that Chennault wanted to set up a meeting between Nixon and Diem. "Meeting would have to be top secret," Allen warned. "Should be but don't see how—with the S.S. [Secret Service]. If it can be (secret) RN would like to see—if not—could Allen see for RN," Nixon scribbled in the margins of the Allen memo.

For his part, Johnson had started back-channel negotiations in the summer of 1967 with Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese revolutionary leader, using Henry Kissinger, then a Harvard professor, as his secret conduit to Hanoi. Kissinger used academic colleagues in Europe, who had known Ho for decades, to sound out North Vietnam's position on peace negotiations, according to *Counsel to the President*, the memoirs of Johnson's secretary of defense, Clark Clifford.

Kissinger's European intermediaries learned Hanoi was prepared to enter into earnest negotiations as soon as Washington ended all U.S. bombing of North Vietnam. LBJ responded by using Kissinger to tell Hanoi of Johnson's willingness to stop the bombing in return for Hanoi's commitment to serious peace talks. Johnson followed up by proposing a bombing halt in a Sept. 27, 1967 speech in San Antonio, Texas. Formal peace negotiations began in Paris in April 1968.

About the same time, Johnson received a private message from Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, Clifford revealed in

***There was a
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But Nixon
undermined the
chance for
peace.***

Counsel to the President. "My colleagues and I believe, and have grounds to believe," Kosygin stated, that an end to the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam would result in a breakthrough in the Paris negotiations. On June 26, 1968, U.S. negotiator Cyrus Vance met in Paris with North Vietnamese diplomats to discuss a possible U.S. bombing halt.

In short, there was a very real possibility for a breakthrough in the Paris peace negotiations by the fall of 1968. By the time Johnson announced his bombing halt on Oct. 31,

be given to the fact that it may happen—that we may want to anticipate it—and that we certainly will want to be ready at the time it does happen," Haldeman wrote in a memo cited in *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*.

Clifford, in *Counsel to the President*, revealed that Kissinger had met privately with Averell Harriman and Vance, LBJ's top negotiators in Paris, in mid-September 1968. Kissinger surely understood how critical the U.S. bombing halt was to the success of the Paris negotiations.

Safire concluded that Thieu's refusal to send South Vietnamese negotiators to the Paris talks made the critical difference in the 1968 presidential elections. "The pollsters told us afterwards that there was a surge for Humphrey just after the president's [bombing halt] speech, but 24 hours later, when Thieu balked and it became apparent there would be no instant peace, the support ebbed. That could have made the difference," Safire wrote in *Before the Fall*. "When people later wondered why Nixon thought so highly of President Thieu, they did not recall that Nixon probably would not be president were it not for Thieu. Nixon remembered."

The implications of Nixon's October Surprise are profound. Had Nixon and Thieu not undercut LBJ's bombing halt, Humphrey may have been elected president. Had Nixon and Thieu not sabotaged the Paris peace talks, a negotiated end to the war may have been possible years earlier. As it turned out, U.S. troops fought in Vietnam for more than four years longer—and twenty thousand U.S. troops, along with untold hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians, were killed during the Nixon presidency. ◀

Jack Colhoun is a Washington-based investigative reporter. His analysis of the CIA's role in the Bush administration's cover-up of Iraqgate in the fall 1992 issue of *CovertAction Information Bulletin* was selected by Project Censored as one of the top 10 most censored stories of 1992.

1968, however, Nixon had plans to disrupt the peace.

"During the closing week of the election, Nixon's campaign manager called his [Chennault] 'almost every day' to persuade her to keep Thieu from going back to Paris for peace talks with the North Vietnamese," Nguyen Tien Hung, a former top aide to Thieu, and Jerrold Schecter wrote in their book *The Palace File*. "She told him that Nixon would be a stronger supporter of [South] Vietnam than Humphrey."

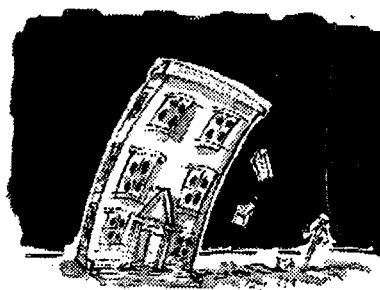
Diem stated in his memoirs, *In the Jaws of History*, that he also urged Thieu not to send a South Vietnamese delegation to the Paris talks after Johnson stopped the U.S. bombing. "Many Republican friends have contacted me and encouraged us to stand firm. They were alarmed by press reports to the effect that you have already softened your position," Diem cabled Thieu on Oct. 23, 1968. Four days later Diem cabled Thieu again stating, "I am in regular contact with the Nixon entourage," naming Chennault, John Mitchell and Sen. John Tower (R-TX) as his contacts.

Nixon revealed, in *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, that Johnson's bombing halt "came as no surprise to me. I had known for several weeks that plans were being made for such an action."

"I had learned of the plan through a highly unusual channel. It began on September 12 when Haldeman brought me a report from John Mitchell that [Nelson] Rockefeller's foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, was available to assist us with advice," Nixon wrote. "He [Kissinger] said that he had just returned from Paris, where he had picked up word that something big was afoot regarding Vietnam."

A few days later Kissinger met again with Nixon campaign officials and warned that Johnson would soon stop the bombing. "Our source does not believe that it is practical to oppose a bombing halt but does feel thought should

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R U S S I A

Shafted

E

Their lives ravaged by devastating market reforms, Russian coal miners may be heading for a confrontation with Boris Yeltsin.

By Fred Weir
SHAKHTI, RUSSIA

Each morning, Gennady Pryazhin descends by cage-lift about a half mile into the suffocating earth. Then he squeezes himself into a sloping tunnel, about the height of a bar stool, and performs a grueling 650-foot crawl to the coal face. Hunched-over, amid screaming machinery and flying dust, he operates a conveyor belt for six long hours before squirming out of the shaft and beginning his journey back to daylight again.

"It's like going through birth twice a day," the burly 37-year-old miner jokes. "It would be difficult to keep doing this even if everything else was fine. But life is turning into pure hell for us."

By late April, Pryazhin and his co-workers hadn't seen their monthly salary of 216,000 rubles (about \$120) for four months. Working conditions at the Yubeleynaya mine, in the

heart of the Donbass coal basin, have deteriorated sharply over the past three years. Production, as at most Russian coal mines, has plummeted almost 30 percent since 1991.

The plight of the coal miners reflects a broader crisis faced by Russian workers suffering the side effects of market reforms. With production dropping faster than in the first year of shock therapy—and with strikes increasing by 900 percent in the first quarter of this year over the same period in 1992—a time bomb appears to be ticking. And this time the explosion will come not in Moscow but in the hinterlands.

There is some irony in the miners' situation. Massive coal strikes in 1989 and 1991 undermined ex-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and helped vault Russian President Boris Yeltsin into power. Acutely aware of the miners' organized might, Yeltsin made sure their wages rose faster than inflation during the turbulent first year of shock-therapy market reforms.

But as part of a general inflation-fighting strategy, the government has gradually cut subsidies for equipment and capital repairs. Following Yeltsin's knockout victory over parliamentary opponents in Moscow last October (See *In These Times*, Oct. 18, 1993), Russia's 800,000 coal workers went without pay for several months.

Coal miners are not worse off than other Russian workers, but they are far better organized than most. Once the pampered aristocracy of Soviet labor, miners have been in the forefront of worker protest since their stunning nationwide walkout in the summer of 1989. Then they called for rapid privatization of their mines and the right to sell coal at world market prices.

Now, ironically, they are demanding more state regulation and higher subsidies. "Now we understand that our fate is deeply connected with that of the whole society," says Vitaly Budko, the lanky 42-year-old former coal face worker who leads Russia's Independent Coal Miner's Union from a grimy office block in downtown Moscow. "We know there are no separate solutions, and we are very anxious to work together with the government to find a common one."

All of Yubeleynaya's 1,600 workers live nearby in Taloviy, a bleak, treeless village set amid slag heaps, with one grocery store, two kindergartens, a school and several rows of simple, one-story wooden cottages. "It's not Paris, but we live here," says Yuri Kounev, chairman of the Yubeleynaya trade union committee. "Everyone here depends totally on the mine. If it closes, the village dies. Some of our people would be starving now if it weren't for their kitchen gardens. Where else in the world does a coal miner also have to be a potato farmer just to get by?"

Strange as it may sound, many coal miners around

Shakhti say the person they respect most is the head of management, Alexei Melkov, general director of Rostovugol, a vast regional conglomerate embracing 26 coal mines and 40,000 workers.

Melkov is one of those people former prime minister and shock-therapy architect Yegor Gaidar had in mind when, following his retreat from government last January, he bitterly assailed the "corps of Red Directors" for mobilizing their vast influence against his reforms. A heavyset and square-jawed former engineer, Melkov certainly looks the part of an obstructionist apparatchik. Seated in his comfortable wood-paneled office in downtown Shakhti, a portrait of Lenin peering from behind his massive desk, he makes no effort to conceal his contempt for the former prime minister's fast-track route to capitalism. It was, he says, a "Harvard experiment ... using the Russian people as guinea pigs," supervised by "zealous young professors" in Moscow.

The alternative approach Melkov outlines, though, smacks more of New Deal Keynesianism than hard-core communism. "If you suddenly cut the subsidies to coal mines, all these communities will die," he says. "There will be just an economic wasteland. We are asking the government to generate a gradual plan and provide the financial means for shutting down unprofitable mines and investing in projects to retrain and relocate displaced miners."

But it's not simply a matter of economics. Without new investment and technological renovation, Russian coal mines are likely to grow even more dangerous than they are today. Statistics compiled by the Independent Coal Miner's Union show that accidents across Russia have risen an appalling 63 percent from last year. Fatal accidents jumped in the first quarter of this year to 83 from 77 for the same period in 1993.

The situation today is tense. In late March, after several months without pay, miners threatened to launch a political strike if subsidies already budgeted for their industry were not paid. The government quickly agreed to turn over 1.2 trillion rubles (about \$650 million) in several weekly installments. By mid-May back wages (albeit ravaged by inflation) were beginning to reach the workers.

But coal miners say they want more convincing indications that the state cares about them and their communities. Specifically, they want to see the long-promised blueprint for restructuring their industry, including plans to close down 40 mines the government insists are unprofitable. And

they want to see, in hard figures, what resources will be provided to ease the transition for them and their families.

"I agree that mines have to be shut and workers released," says Vladimir Dubov, a miner at Yubeleynaya. "I am ready to share the sacrifice. But I want to know what to expect in return. We coal miners have worked hard all our lives; is it too much to ask for help to rebuild our homes and to find new jobs?"

For Budko, who may be the last coal miner in Russia to have anything nice to say about President Yeltsin, rising anger among the rank and file presents a dangerous

dilemma. "People are losing faith and hope. It is increasingly difficult these days to convince my comrades that now is not the time for a general strike," he says.

"We are the leaders of the working-class movement in Russia. If coal miners move into action, it could develop into a very broad and serious situation very quickly. It might destroy whatever stability remains in the country."

Without a sea change in government policy, that confrontation appears more than likely in the next few months. "How long can people be told to be patient while they watch things keep worsening?" asks Budko. "I don't understand why our government cannot seem to apply itself to anything but rhetoric and factional struggle."

Surprisingly, considering all the abuse they've taken, many coal miners say they would gladly forgive all and support the government if it showed a little genuine concern for their plight.

"No one wants to strike," says trade union chairman Kounev. "But miners are asking themselves: how long can we go on this way? We worked all winter to make sure others had coal for heating and electricity. We worked even when we didn't receive wages ourselves. Now we are asking the government to think about our future. We want to survive, too."

Fred Weir writes regularly from Russia for *In These Times*.



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VIEWPOINT

Identity crisis

By Ellen Meiksins Wood

It used to be that the main target of the left—especially of the socialist left—was capitalism. Now it's not even clear that people who call themselves socialists, let alone "left liberals," see it as part of their political or intellectual project to contest capitalism. It isn't just that they have accepted capitalism, for better or worse, as the best social order we're likely to get. It is that the dominant intellectual and political currents of the Western left hardly understand the very *idea* of capitalism.

Addressing capitalism means considering it as a historically specific system of social relations, a social form with its own logic and its own laws of motion—the imperatives of competition, profit maximization, "productivity," "growth" and "flexibility," with all their social and ideological consequences. Capitalism has a historically unique capacity to expand itself and to engulf other systems of social relations. It is the most "totalizing" system the world has ever known, both in the sense that it pervades all aspects of our lives and that its spread is uniquely global.

Yet the left today talks instead of fragmentation, "difference," the impossibility and undesirability of "totalizing knowledges" and universal values. In this postmodern view, capitalism as a totalizing system doesn't exist. What we have instead are a lot of particular identities and forms of

domination, but there is no—or no knowable—overarching system that imposes itself on us all.

The best we can hope for, the postmodern left argues, is a plurality of local and particular resistances within the interstices of the existing social order. Some people take the optimistic view that in this fragmented, postmodern world, there are many spaces where alternative social values and practices can flourish. Thus, "identity politics." Others look at this fragmented world more pessimistically. But in either case, capitalism and its underlying principles remain unchallenged.

To be sure, there are various oppressions—having to do with gender, race, sexuality and so on—that should be challenged, and that the traditional left has tended to ignore, or merely pay lip service to. And it is

*As capitalism
imposes itself on
all social relations,
the left fragments
into myriad
warring identities.*

important for the democratic left to demonstrate a greater appreciation of diversity than it has tended to in the past. But it isn't clear why, having recognized the complexities, diversities and multiple oppressions in the so-called postmodern world, we can't also recognize that capitalism is not only dominant but massively present in every aspect of our lives and in all our "identities."

For all the apparent plurality and fragmentation of the "postmodern" world, the overwhelming tendency of capitalism is to homogenize rather than diversify human experience. Certainly, the various special oppressions have a moral claim on our attention, and need to be fought against. But class, as the constitutive relation of capitalism, has a more strategic location and a more universal reach than other social "identities."

For that matter, does it really make sense to lump together very different social categories and relations—gender, race, sexual preferences and class—in a single concept like "identity"? What kind of guide to politics is an indiscriminate category like that? Let's leave aside the many conceptual problems involved in applying the term "identity" to a wide variety of social *relations*. Just consider the practical differences among these various identities.

By definition, the abolition of class would mean the abolition of the capitalist system—assuming, that is, we agree that capitalism exists. But would the end of racial or sexual inequality destroy capitalism?

A truly democratic society would celebrate differences of culture, gender, sexuality and "life styles"—and make practical and institutional provision for their full enjoyment. But how could one think of celebrating or institutionalizing *class* differences in a democratic way?

To deny or ignore the systemic totality of capitalism has far-reaching

political implications. For one thing, there is no room any more for the idea of socialism. Once you replace the concept of capitalism with an undifferentiated plurality of social identities and special oppressions, socialism as the antithesis to capitalism loses all meaning. So, for example, socialism is being replaced by indeterminate conceptions of "democracy" or "radical democracy," the virtue of which is supposed to be that they can cover the full range of identities and dominations, not just class.

A number of questions come to mind. If socialism is the specific alternative to capitalism, to what particular social relations is "radical democracy" supposed to be the specific alternative? What social form will "radical democracy" take? And if a "radically democratic" opposition has no specific target, what is its political objective or program?

I have seen little evidence that proponents of identity politics have attempted to follow their fragmented vision to its logical conclusion. How many of them really want to deny the wide-ranging effects of the capitalist system on all humanity and nature? And if they concede these effects, how many of them would want to admit their submission to the capitalist system, if not in a happy embrace at least in despairing defeat? And if they want neither to embrace capitalism nor to admit defeat, what are the consequences?

If capitalism is, as I would argue, not just another specific oppression alongside many others but an all-embracing compulsion that imposes itself on all our social relations, what kind of politics follows from that? And if class relations constitute capitalism in a way that other "identities" don't, where should we situate class in identity politics?

There are other questions, too. Identity politics has taught us to acknowledge and celebrate difference and to be more sensitive to the multiplicity of power and human oppression; but there still remains the question of where, among all our diversi-

ties, we should locate our solidarities. Here, it's hard to see how postmodern pluralism is much of an improvement over the old variety of liberal pluralism. The left used to criticize the old pluralism for its excessive individualism, and for creating a myth of the sovereign individual. This myth served as an instrument of capitalist hegemony by separating human beings into atomized individuals (or "interest groups")—while undermining solidarities of class. The new pluralism is again disaggregating people, this time into separate identities or even several separate identities for each individual; and in that respect, it too disables opposition to the existing order.



Political organization has always been a matter of creating unity out of diversity and difference. There is no doubt that traditional class politics, in the form of the traditional labor and socialist movements, never dealt adequately with problems like gender or race. But this kind of politics did at least provide some basis for uniting diverse people in common emancipatory struggles. For all its failures, it had an inclusive program unequalled by any other emancipatory project. This is in sharp contrast to the new post-Marxist, postmodernist identity politics, which seems designed to drive people apart.

Finally, and more immediately, what does identity politics have to say about the main preoccupations of the

world today? Apart from the tragedies of "ethnic" or inter-communal violence that dominate the evening news (and that represent identity politics with a vengeance), the main theme is economic crisis. Both capital and government in the advanced capitalist countries are responding with increasing demands for "flexibility" to make their economies more competitive—which means depressing the conditions of workers, weakening social welfare programs and easing environmental controls. In North America, we have NAFTA, which is transparently designed to drive the conditions of American and Canadian workers downward to converge with their

Mexican neighbors. In Europe, economic integration is undermining the mechanisms—such as deficits and devaluation—that have been used in the past to cushion unemployment and accommodate wage increases. In the so-called new democracies, "market disciplines" are creating unbearable strains.

In all these cases, there is great potential for class resistance.

NAFTA was approved in the face of opposition from organized labor. And Europe—most symptomatically, Germany—has recently seen a spate of labor unrest and an increasing politicization of trade unions. One of the more recent economic "miracles," South Korea, has been experiencing a modern class politics for the first time. And so on. But as we abandon class politics and go off in search of "identity," where are the political and intellectual resources of the Western left to cope with all this?◀

Ellen Meiksins Wood teaches at York University in Toronto. She is the author of *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism* (Verso) and *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (forthcoming from Cambridge University Press).

Conquest of the East

B

ernardo Bertolucci's new film, *Little Buddha*, is a beguiling fable of East meets West that proceeds on two levels, present and past. In the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, the current refuge of many Tibetan Buddhists fleeing the Chinese occupation of their nation, an elderly lama learns that his colleagues have found a child who may be the reincarnation of a revered teacher.

Lama Norbu sets out to visit the boy. But here's the zinger: he's a little blond American in Seattle (played by Alex Wiesendanger), who knows nothing of Buddhism and who lives a life far removed from the exotic spiritual realm of a Tibetan monastery.

Upon meeting, the lama and the little leaguer seem simpatico, and the boy's parents are surprisingly open to the Buddhists' desire for cultural exchange.

In trying to capture Asian culture, Bernardo Bertolucci indulges in his own form of imperial conquest.

By Pat Dowell

But this is the '90s and the exchange is going to be mostly one way, because modern America has very little to offer the visiting lamas. Even the lush city of Seattle seems cold and uninviting to cinematographer Vittorio Storaro's camera. Its silvery blues offer a significant contrast to the warm reds and saffrons of Lama Norbu's home—not to mention the golden, bejeweled world of Prince Siddhartha, the founder of Buddhism 2,500 years ago. His story, presented in a picture book given to the boy by Lama Norbu, is brought to life by Bertolucci. It serves the movie's other fabulous plot, with Keanu Reeves as the Enlightened One.

The Seattle boy, Jesse, is enraptured by the tale of Siddhartha and by Lama Norbu's gentle playfulness. But Jesse's father (an affluent architect played by musician Chris Isaak) is skeptical—until his best friend commits suicide. The gnawing emptiness of that act leaves him grasping for something substantive in the void. And so he agrees to travel with his son to Bhutan with Lama Norbu. The movie shifts to contemporary Nepal and Bhutan, and India as it was two millennia ago, when Siddhartha rejected his father's palace for the path to enlightenment.

The casting of Reeves is at once silly and inspired, and entirely in keeping with the fairy-tale blissfulness with which Bertolucci directs *Little Buddha*. Of Chinese and Polynesian heritage, Reeves has a priestly beauty—and he looks terrific in long, oiled curls and bedecked with silk and gold. He's handsome in meditation too. You have to laugh when he opens his mouth to talk about lifting the curse of death from man, but hey, this is Bertolucci's heartfelt attempt to fashion a Buddhist primer for densely pragmatic Westerners.

What will Buddhists think? In an interview before *Little Buddha* opened in the United States, Bertolucci told me that the Dalai Lama approved the project. In fact, the religious leader even encouraged Bertolucci in the seemingly impolitic casting of Chinese actor Ying Ruocheng—the former Chinese deputy minister of culture—to play one of the lamas whom his government has targeted in its campaign to undermine Buddhism. Bertolucci says the Dalai Lama recognized it as a potential political gesture: a prominent Chinese figure “paying tribute to Tibetan culture.”



Little Buddha
Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci

PHOTOS: ANGELO NOVATI/IRAWAX FILMS



Alex Wiesendanger
and Keanu Reeves.

Political gestures are still important to Bertolucci, even ones as dubious as that. He has been, after all, one of the world's premier "political" filmmakers—think of his study of the fascist psyche, *The Conformist*, or his epic chronicle of labor vs. capital, *1900*.

He now thinks of those films as examples of "socialist idealism," and admits to feeling "lost" after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Not that he mourned the repressive communist governments, but he felt the socialist dream was utterly dead. The serene subject of Buddhism appealed to him in no small part, he reflects, because he felt so despondent. He adds that in *Buddha*, he sees a revolutionary thinker who, like Marx and Freud, toppled the gods and "put man at the center of the universe."

He is calling it the third and final chapter in his "Oriental trilogy," the first two installments being 1987's *The Last Emperor* and 1990's *The Sheltering Sky*. The opulent imagery of *Emperor* and *Little Buddha* demonstrates how fascinated with Asia Bertolucci has become, and there's more than a little of the Western idolatry of exotica in both films. A sophisticated student of politics and culture, Bertolucci might be expected to recognize that the West's infatuation with Asian culture has often been the flip side of colonialism and imperialism: at its best a condescending affection for the "inscrutable East"; at its worst a mythic justification for subjugation.

Bertolucci scoffs today at such concerns as overblown examples of political correctness. "I think it's very important to be PC, but to be naturally PC," he says with a little exasperation. "Not to think too much about it, otherwise it's a mess. I think naturally I am PC; if I start to think, 'Oh my god, will I be PC?' it's the end."

But you might say Bertolucci indulges in his own form of imperial conquest. Having already breached the Forbidden City with his cameras for *The Last Emperor*, he marched on to Nepal and the reclusive Kingdom of Bhutan for *Little Buddha*. Bringing a film production company into a small country is like undertaking an invasion, even if only a temporary one.

While Bertolucci says he gained favor at the royal court of Bhutan because all over Asia *The Last Emperor* is deemed a film that does not patronize the East, producer Jeremy Thomas, comparing the rigors of shooting in Bhutan or Nepal, reveals with rueful frankness the realpolitik of epic production values. "If you're making a film in a democracy, it sounds strange, but it's quite difficult," he says. "If you're going into a country like China, you get permission from a single source, it works completely, as in Bhutan." Katmandu, on the other hand, offered all the inconvenience of a boisterous body politic.

Such are the facts of filmmaking on the scale that Bertolucci practices—full of complex contradictions that ruffle this charming film's seemingly placid surface. I suspect I'll end up storing it among my guilty pleasures. ◀

I N P R I N T

Spinning the dial

By Pat Aufderheide

Across the radio dial, interested listeners can find signals belonging to labor unions, religious groups and universities. On and off the air, people are debating how to pay for programming—maybe a tax on the radio sets? Maybe subscriptions? The commerce secretary sternly inveighs against what's known as "toll"—i.e., advertiser-supported—programming, because it poses a threat of "great harm and even vital danger to the entire broadcasting structure." Even commercial broadcasters are skeptical that the public will stand for much advertising—which is seen as a disagreeable irritation.

The year is 1926, and the battle for the future of the airwaves is on.

Our broadcasting system is, of course, the result of a set of historic choices. Perhaps you know the short version of this history. After the chaos of the early '20s, broadcasters begged the government to bring order to the airwaves. The communications laws of 1927 and 1934 established a system of commercial broadcasting licensed to serve "the public interest, convenience and necessity." And shortly after that, the electronic media became big business, only occasionally stopping—under duress—to bow hastily to the "public interest."

This version of the story, while true, begs some questions. Why did the ordering of the airwaves take this particular form? There was nothing inevitable, after all, about advertiser-driven programming, with licenses going more easily to those interested in profits rather than a "cause." There were other alternatives—such as a "mixed" (partly commercial, partly non-) arrangement, or perhaps a common carriage model in which license holders would lease time. Why was non-commercial radio—a fact of the radio dial pre-1927—completely cut out of the deal that finally went down?

After years of painstaking research in archives no one

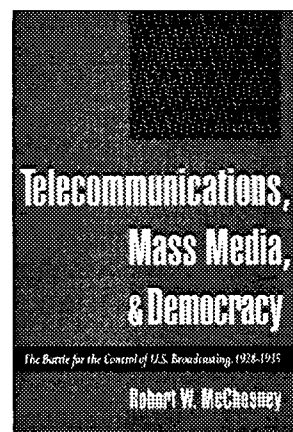
had ever consulted before for these purposes, Robert McChesney, who teaches broadcast history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has uncovered the story behind the story. His new book, despite its clunky title—*Telecommunications, Mass Media and Democracy*—is a pathbreaking work. It provides a blow-by-blow account of how we got the broadcasting system that then-Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover so grimly warned about.

In all its minute (and sometimes tedious) detail, the tale is directed to scholars, public interest advocates and policy-makers. But the book is also full of lessons for anyone concerned about social change and freedom of expression.

As it turns out, the ordering of the airwaves did not happen as it did without a fight. Opposing the deal, as readers of broadcast historian Erik Barnouw already know, was a loose coalition of liberal foundations, labor unions, the Catholic church and the ACLU. Prominent intellectuals—such as philosopher John Dewey and progressive historian Charles Beard—opposed commercial broadcasting as well. When he realized the direction the fight was going, Lee DeForest, one of the inventors of radio, said, "To be known as the 'Father of Broadcasting' was once an honor of which I was proud, but I'm disgusted and ashamed of my pet child."

The campaign raised some basic issues of public life in a democracy, and it generated some fine rhetoric. Coalition leader Joy Elmer Morgan, of the National Education Association, explained that "The real question at issue is whether the common people, having spent centuries of blood and sacrifice to secure a right to a voice in their own destinies, are now ready to surrender that right to the money changers or whether they wish to keep their hard-won freedom for themselves. With its radio broadcasting in the hands of the money changers, no nation can be free."

But the coalition foundered, for reasons that will sound familiar today. There were devastating divisions within the ranks. The ACLU in particular came to see broadcasters as representatives of free speech—and a rival coalition that it backed proposed voluntary programs, in which broadcasters would donate time for public interest issues. (Although broadcasters sanctimoniously swore they'd do that anyway, they never did.) Reformers had few resources; many organizations couldn't convince their memberships that broadcasting was



**Telecommunications,
Mass Media and
Democracy:**
**The Battle for the
Control of U.S.
Broadcasting, 1928-1935**
By Robert W. McChesney
Oxford University Press
393 pp., \$45

an important struggle. By contrast, corporate interests had deep pockets.

The failure of these public interest reformers holds some relevant lessons for today's organizers. It matters a great deal how you frame the debate. The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) won the spin war, touting ad-driven radio as "the American Plan" and "the American System." Decades before Mark Fowler, Reagan's thug at the Federal Communications Commission, decided that "the public interest" meant "what the public is interested in," the NAB celebrated the democratic nature of "Listener Rules Broadcasting." The NAB thus cannily handed the reform coalition the job of explaining why their proposals were not un-American. And this at a time when the very notion of American was up for debate; the Communist Party was winning millions of Depression-desperate Americans to its cause.

In an unequal fight, numbers at the grass roots count. A disorganized left didn't help. (McChesney grounds himself here in James Weinstein's and Martin Sklar's historical work on early 20th-century political economy and the decline of American socialism.) The reformers found it impossible to rally consistent, broad public support for their issue. Meanwhile, corporate-backed lobbyists were promising legislators a service that would generate new jobs and revenue, would be uncontroversial and would require little government oversight. The advantages of the plans the reformers backed were, by contrast, largely intangible.

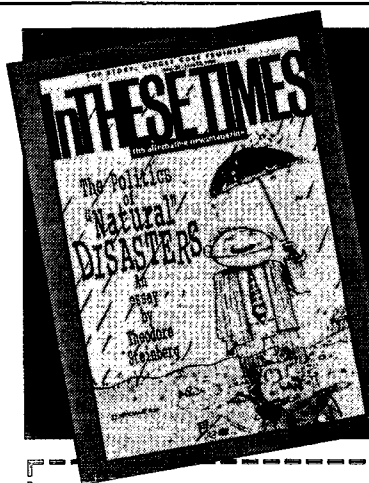
And it sure does matter who controls the airwaves and printing presses. Broadcasters simply did not cover the debate over the future of the airwaves. And since some important wire services were owned by chains with broadcast holdings, national coverage in newspapers was limited as well.

Reformers turned to local newspapers—radio's rival—for coverage, and even got major trade associations to denounce commercial radio by 1933. But then the newspapers used the issue as a club to convince broadcasters to make a deal: radio would no longer provide news (just opinion), and newspapers would start carrying radio listings. Once the deal was struck, even print coverage evaporated.

McChesney's sober work, punctuated by the occasional rip-roaring quote, should inform struggles going on inside and beyond the academy. In journalism schools, where the programs typically depend on industry largesse, he points out, students are taught that "this is the best possible and only conceivable media system available to the American people." They now have ammunition for another perspective.

The history of past battles is also timely information for anyone in the middle of the "information superhighway" policy war. The federal government's indisputably noble vision of a broad, accessible information network is being whittled away by communications companies that want to shape the future to their shareholders' needs. The radio reformers of the late '20s and the early '30s wouldn't be surprised at all.

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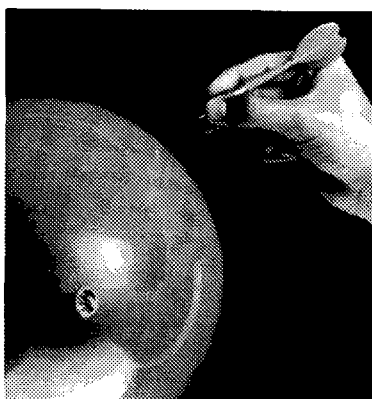
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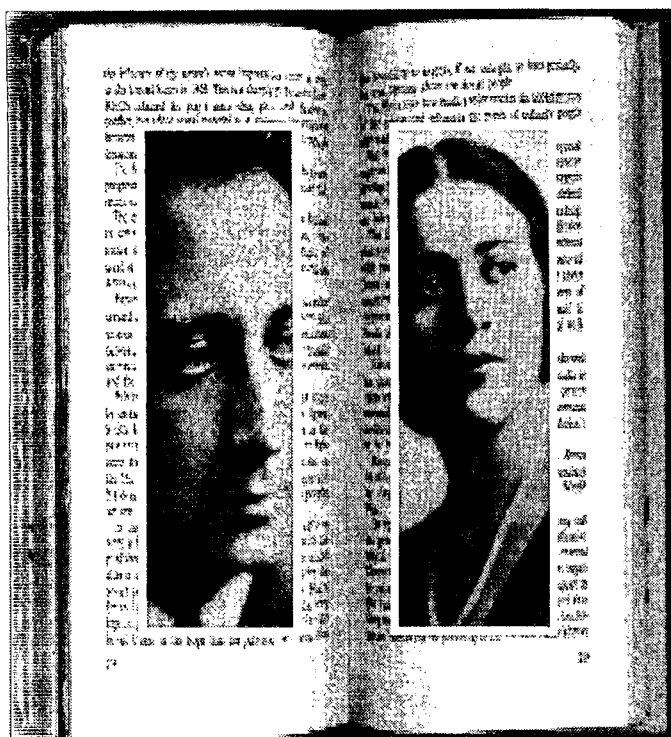
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SPEED READING



The Beginning of the Journey: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling

By Diana Trilling
Harcourt Brace
442 pp., \$24.95

An émigré novelist who fled Nazi Austria once remarked that although he had lost his country, his home and his language, he could at least take comfort in the fact that he never had one of his books reviewed by Diana Trilling. Even among the literary sharks whose company she kept, Trilling was known for her teeth.

The memoir may soon eclipse the essay as the preferred expression of the New York intellectual, and it suits Trilling well. *The Beginning of the Journey* provides unsparing criticism of others in Trilling's circle; it's refreshingly free of the brazen self-congratulation and score-settling that mars so many other reminiscences by her quarrelsome coterie.

As if to beat future historians to the punch, Trilling is startlingly revealing, especially about her late husband Lionel, the better-known author of such refined works as *The Liberal Imagination*, who died in 1975. Given his sensitivity to the ambiguities of the moral life, it should not surprise us, though it does, that Lionel Trilling despised the very qualities in himself that led others to admire him: reasonableness, moderation, quiet. The great literary critic was a frustrated novelist who believed that his "stern self-prohibitions" had deprived him of the ability to write fiction well.

Diana Trilling curiously does not draw the connection

between her husband's private anguish and his literary criticism, which elevated disappointment to an intellectual disposition. "Despair with its wits about it is very different from despair that is stupid," he wrote in an early issue of *Partisan Review*, distinguishing despair that fosters the "abandonment of illusion ... from despair which generates tender new cynicisms." Such pessimism of the intellect, we can now surely say, was the habit of a critic burdened by an acute awareness of his own limitations.

The Trillings were not always given to resigned liberalism. Despite an occasional slip ("Lionel and I never regarded ourselves as anything but liberals"), and despite her tired attempt to paint Cold War liberalism as the only alternative to Stalinism and McCarthyism, Diana Trilling is more honest than most about her early radicalism.

Won to communism in 1931, the Trillings had turned against Stalinism by 1933. Mary McCarthy recalled in her memoirs that the Trotskyists had "all the beautiful girls"—Diana Trilling top among them. Trilling denies that she had any organizational ties to Trotskyism, but she speaks plainly of her socialist politics and her preference for Trotsky throughout the '30s. She believes today, though, that her initial radical steps were not so much the result of "a political impulse as a need to escape the fear of being alone."

Such admissions of inner turmoil open the vulnerable self beneath the fierce critical reputation to our view. The disintegration of her parents' middle-class world during the Great Depression, her battle with hyperthyroidism, her paralyzing phobias, her frustrations in psychoanalysis: these cannot but invite sympathy. Her closing salute to "the life of significant contention": that cannot but win assent.

—Christopher Phelps

The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography

By David Macey
Pantheon
599 pp., \$30

The late French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault led many contradictory lives. Although he was famous for proclaiming the death of the author, the irrelevance of biography and even the "end of man," Foucault has now become the subject of several major biographies. In his massive and engaging addition to the genre, David Macey shows that Foucault was much more active in militant politics than his image as an austere French intellectual might suggest, documenting the tensions between Foucault's intellectual, political and personal lives.

In Macey's portrait, Foucault emerges as a highly committed intellectual adept at politics both in and outside the academy. Although there were often tensions among his many lives, his political involvement in many ways aided his intellectual work, contributing passion to (and useful material for) his writing projects. Foucault's monumental work on prisons, which culminated in the volume *Discipline and*

Punish, was nourished by his intense involvement in prisoners' struggles, his foundation of a *Group d'Informations sur les Prisons* and his tireless involvement in a wide variety of human rights struggles.

Although he had problems with the excesses of the Marxist ultra-left following the upheavals of May 1968, Foucault worked with a variety of groups and individuals and appears to have been a highly effective organizer, frequently traveling to other countries (from Franco's Spain to the Shah's Iran) to support dissidents and to protest oppression. Just before his death from AIDS in 1984, Foucault was ready to join an expedition to the South China Sea to rescue Vietnamese boat people.

One gets the impression from Macey's study of a full and exciting life, dedicated to intellectual work, political struggle and a varied social life. Yet Macey, for all of the illuminating details he provides, ultimately fails to illuminate *why* Foucault still matters to us, why his contributions still tower over those of his contemporaries. Foucault's great contribution was to ferret out the complex connections between ideas, institutions and practices, between power and knowledge. In his own work, he relates the emergence of the modern intellectual class to the rise of prisons, mental institutions, hospitals, public schools, compulsory military service and other disciplinary institutions.

In his major works, Foucault brilliantly traced the history of modernity, challenging those who present history as a straightforward narrative of progress. Instead, Foucault offered penetrating insight into how modern institutions like prisons and mental institutions, far from being simple examples of reform, have in fact had the effects of strengthening the powers of domination by the state.

Perhaps Foucault's greatest limitation, however, was his failure to explore the role of the mass media and the institutions of the consumer society in producing a new kind of domination. Foucault constantly claimed to be engaging in a study of "the history of the present," but in a sense it was precisely the present that eluded him. There was something very old-fashioned in his conception of intellectual activity. While his major works illuminate salient features of the present, his gaze was primarily historical. And while he succeeded in mapping the genesis and trajectory of modern societies, he missed what is most novel about our present age.

Like his sometime nemesis Karl Marx, Foucault sat hours every day in a library, taking endless notes on old texts. Like Marx, he was very interested in and involved with the political struggles of the day. But, unlike Marx, he failed to articulate the structures and social relations of the capitalist system and thus was not able to chart the dramatic changes that capitalist societies have been undergoing in recent years. And so, while Foucault remains important to critical social theory and radical democratic politics today, he is of only limited help in enabling us to make sense of our media culture and of contemporary high-tech society.

— Douglas Kellner



Dual Attraction: Understanding Bisexuality

By Martin S. Weinberg, Colin J. Williams and
Douglas W. Pryor
Oxford University Press
437 pp., \$27.50

For years bisexuality has been seen by homosexuals and heterosexuals alike as at best a state of confusion, at worst a kind of cynical sexual tourism. Lately, though, it's acquired a certain tenuous legitimacy—as the title of last year's "Lesbian, Gay and Bi March on Washington" attests.

In staking out their territory on a map of sexual identity, bisexuals have won a paradoxical victory, unintentionally reaffirming traditional conceptions of sexuality as a system of border lines and confines. *Dual Attraction* is as much an exploration of the tensions inherent in the very idea of sexual identity as it is a chronicle of bisexual inclinations and behavior. The authors' touchstone is the famous Kinsey scale, which abandoned the simple dualism that described everyone as either homosexual or heterosexual in favor of a more nuanced seven-point scale.

Yet Kinsey's scale was as constricting as it was expansive. *Dual Attraction*, attempting to move beyond the pseudo-scientific pretensions of such labeling, allows its subjects to categorize themselves. But this approach has its pitfalls as well. Based on a series of interviews with self-identified bisexuals living in San Francisco in the early '80s, the book falls well short of the ambitions of its subtitle, which promises readers an "understanding" of bisexuality itself. *Dual Attraction* is, rather, a chronicle of the lives of a particular group of people who quite consciously maintain an "open gender schema." The authors suggest that everyone has the potential to be attracted to those of their own sex as well as to those of the other; most simply shutter off one set of urges as they mature. Given the right environment, it is possible to "disconnect gender and sexual preference." Bisexuals love both genders, the authors conclude, mainly because they have the opportunity to do so.

This interpretation is perhaps inevitable in a study focusing on such a vocal and exploratory group of people as self-identified bisexuals living in San Francisco. With its references to anonymous partners and swing parties, *Dual Attraction* is strangely anachronistic. Most of the interviews were conducted more than a decade ago, and even a lengthy section on the impact of AIDS fails to diffuse the book's strong whiff of the swinging '70s. *Dual Attraction* nonetheless breaks new ground. In their attempt to provide a nuanced description of sexuality and sexual identity, the authors venture into regions that have for too long gone largely unexplored.

—Etelka Lehoczky

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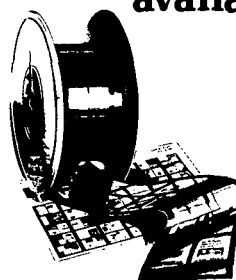
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had characterized her life? For her to be in some nursing facility with generic art, synthetic curtains and formica furniture was unthinkable. She belonged where she was, in her own gently decorated bedroom, attended full-time by my efficient, fast-talking mother, who was her sister-in-law and best friend.

After Jackie Kennedy died, the TV commentators spoke of the former first lady's significance as the bearer of the flame that symbolized her dead husband. For me she carried another significance—the endurance of the sophistication I associated with Aunt Ethel, surpassing commonplace beauty or even ordinary intelligence. Ethel, like Jackie, seemed to know how to make the world habitable for herself, how to be simultaneously dignified and empathic, reassuringly strong but eminently accessible to her loved ones.

Yet this term, "sophisticated," I now notice, has an anachronistic ring. It seems to have been the best adjective we had available to describe a woman who stood apart. Both my aunt and Jackie grew up before Betty Friedan limned the feminine mystique. They were women who could supervise the setting of a table from shrimp fork to coffee spoon, who knew when white gloves were required. I also imagine that Jackie, like Ethel, had the literary acumen to turn "The Merchant of Venice" into a soothing bedtime story. As a 12-year-old, it was my unexpressed, but ardent, belief that they had mastered such domestic arts because they wished to lead civilized and rational lives—not because such knowledge was the proper domain of women trained to create comfortable lives for men.

Quite possibly, these women were the most inspiring models available to me. By my pre-adolescent lights, the fact that both of these women were *sophisticated* could be traced to something innate in them. The possibility that their elegance was a product of male wealth (in Jackie's case, that of her father and husbands; in Ethel's, that of a shadowy lover-benefactor), constructed from the ability to pay for

good haircuts, designer clothes, servants and well-trained interior decorators, simply did not occur to me. No, what these women had was an ineffable aura that I could emulate but could only really achieve if I had—and could sustain—the right raw materials: classic beauty, keen intelligence and strong moral fiber.

That these women I idolized were brainy and independent as well as attractive must have helped draw me, by the time I reached college, to feminism. But their compelling physical presences animated my adoration from adolescence on. That those dazzling icons should collapse under the cold weight of mortality strikes me as not merely sad, not merely tragic, but absurd.

All those Jackie words we've been hearing—glamour, style, class, taste—have come to represent aspirations embarrassing to most feminists. So why do so many of us feel like weeping at the loss of her? Perhaps we harbor a primitive faith in these extravagant ideals because they still carry the aroma of immortality. Deep in our little-girl psyches, formed long before Golda Meir and Barbara Jordan made it into the history books, we cling to the hope that deference, tact and good looks will protect us from being too affected by the pain around us. Maybe Jackie's death affects us so profoundly because late 20th-century feminism has neither eradicated nor accommodated all of our sensibilities.

Especially for women who grew up in the '50s, primitive associations of femininity with safety remain powerful. My daughters are hindered by no such illusions. They admire Hillary Clinton for storming Capitol Hill and holding her own press conferences. Unhindered by nostalgia for a pre-feminist utopia, they guffaw at video from the '50s showing Jackie explaining a political wife's duty to love her husband. My daughters' concerns for the future revolve around challenges like combining a veterinary practice with being a gymnast—not the challenge of finding a suitable husband. That, I guess, is a good sign. ▲

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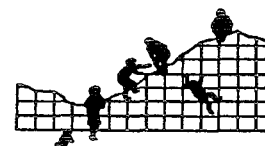
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I N T H E E N D

Sophisticated ladies

By Beth Schulman

Jackie Kennedy *died*? I am mystified by my inability to believe that she was mortal. She has not been central—not even palpably marginal—to my consciousness for 30 years. Yet the images and audiotapes that have been clogging the airwaves since her death choke me with sadness. I cannot imagine her *dying*: her regal body frail and diminished, her dignity undone by pain, nausea, hair loss, bed stains, fatigue and all the other ignominies of raging metastasis.

My Aunt Ethel died of cervical cancer just two months after Jackie's husband was killed in Dallas. The two tragedies are linked, with the stubborn idiosyncrasy of memory, in my consciousness. I saw Ethel last on Christmas Day 1963, weeping in her bed because she had not been able to buy her nieces and nephews gifts. She had been deteriorating for two years and had no strength left—not even enough to comb her own hair. Propped up among the satin comforters, she was swathed in some silken bed jacket that, despite her pathetic condition, exuded such reassuring elegance that I longed to reach for her sleeve, to rub the fabric between my thumb and forefingers. I sensed that the gesture might somehow have relieved my sense of impotence. She would surely have known then that I still found her graceful, still idolized her exquisite bearing, her presence as rich as the colors and textures that filled her bedroom. But I did not reach for her sleeve, standing instead with my left hand squeezing my right forearm, next to her bed but not so near that she could see my tears.

No, it is more likely that when Ethel gathered the where-withal to survey her surroundings she saw only the humiliating clutter: I.V. stands, bedpans, medicine trays littered with bottles of sterile water and alcohol, cotton and hypodermics, a wheeled tray table, even her own autoclave. She must have



been too congested by the visual evidence of her thorough dependence and debilitation to guess that I still found her beautiful. How could she have understood that even at the age of 12, I knew that she was dying with the dignity that

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